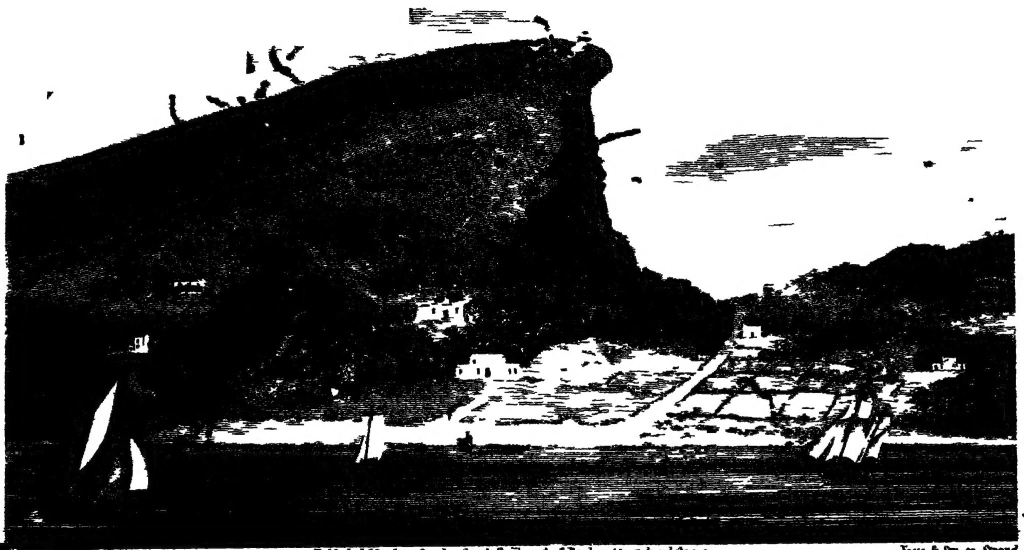


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THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN,

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

AUTHENTICATED, ILLUSTRATED, & EXPLAINED

BY

HUGH CAMPBELL, Esq., F.A.S. Ed.

In Two Volumes.

VOL. II.



O sacer et magnus labor, omnia fato
Eripis, et populis donas mortalibus ævum
——— Pharsalia nostra
Vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabitur ævo '—Lucan.

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OSSIAN'S POEMS.

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AN

Epic Poem.

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ARGUMENT TO BOOK I.

Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, lord of Atha in Connaught, the most potent chief of the race of the Firbolg, having murdered, at Temora the royal palace, Cormac the son of Artho, the young king of Ireland, usurped the throne. Cormac was lineally descended from Conar the son of Trenmor, the great grandfather of Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the western coast of Scotland. Fingal resented the behaviour of Cairbar, and resolved to pass over into Ireland, with an army, to re-establish the royal family on the Irish throne. Early intelligence of his designs coming to Cairbar, he assembled some of his tribes in Ulster, and at the same time ordered his brother Cathmor to follow him speedily with an army, from Temora. Such was the situation of affairs when the Caledonian invaders appeared on the coast of Ulster.

The poem opens in the morning. Cairbar is represented as retired from the rest of the army, when one of his scouts brought him news of the landing of Fingal. He assembles a council of his chiefs. Foldath the chief of Moma haughtily despises the enemy; and is reprimanded warmly by Malthos. Cairbar, after hearing their debate, orders a feast to be prepared, to which, by his bard Olla, he invites Oscar the son of Ossian; resolving to pick a quarrel with that hero, and so have some pretext for killing him. Oscar came to the feast; the quarrel happened; the followers of both fought, and Cairbar and Oscar fell by mutual wounds. The noise of the battle reached Fingal's army. The king came on, to the relief of Oscar, and the Irish fell back to the army of Cathmor, who was advanced to the banks of the river Lubar, on the heath of Moilena. Fingal, after mourning over his grandson, ordered Ullin the chief of his bards to carry his body to Morven, to be there interred. Night coming on, Althan, the son of Conachar, relates to the king the particulars of the murder of Cormac. Fillan, the son of Fingal, is sent to observe the motions of Cathmor by night, which concludes the actions of the first day. The scene of this book is a plain, near the hill of Mora, which rose on the borders of the heath of Moilena, in Ulster. *M.*—For this plain see the Map. *C.*



TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK I.

THE blue waves of Erin roll in light. The mountains are covered with day. Trees shake their dusky heads, in the breeze. Grey torrents pour their noisy streams. Two green hills, with aged oaks, surround a narrow plain. The blue course of a stream is there. On its banks stood Cairbar* of Atha.† His spear supports the king: the red eye of his fear is sad. Cormac rises in his soul, with all his ghastly wounds. The grey form of the youth appears in darkness. Blood pours from his airy side. Cairbar thrice threw

* Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, was descended lineally from Lathon the chief of the Firbolg, the first colony who settled in the south of Ireland. The Cael were in possession of the northern coast of that kingdom, and the first monarchs of Ireland were of their race. Hence arose those differences between the two nations, which terminated, at last, in the murder of Cormac, and the usurpation of Cairbar, lord of Atha, (Lough Neagh) who is mentioned in this place. *M.*—This is doubtful. *C.*

† The progenitor of the present noble family of O'Neill, whose ancestors I have before noticed, were kings of Ulster. The destruction of Shane's castle, by fire, prevents me saying more in this place, than that all the family records were burned in it, which I much regret; but in other notes, and in the dissertation, I enter more largely and satisfactorily upon this subject. *C.*

his spear on earth. Thrice he stroaked his beard. His steps are short. He often stops. He tosses his sinewy arms. He is like a cloud in the desert, varying its form to every blast. The valleys are sad around, and fear, by turns, the shower! The king, at length, resumed his soul. He took his pointed spear. He turned his eye to Moi-lena. The scouts of blue ocean came. They came with steps of fear, and often looked behind. Cairbar knew that the mighty were near! He called his gloomy chiefs.

The sounding steps of his warriors came. They drew, at once, their swords. There Morlath* stood with darkened face. Hidalla's long hair sighs in the wind. Red-haired Cormar bends on his spear, and rolls his side-long-looking eyes. Wild is the look of Malthos from beneath two shaggy brows. Foldath stands, like an oozy rock, that covers its dark sides with foam. His spear is like Slimora's fir, that meets the wind of heaven. His shield is marked with the strokes of battle. His red eye despises danger. These and a thousand other chiefs surrounded the king of Erin, when the scout of ocean came, Mor-annal,†

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* Mór-lath, *great iu the day of battle.* Hidalla, *mildly looking hero.* Cor-mar, *expert at sea.* Málth-os, *slow to speak.* Foldath, *generous.*

Foldath, who is here strongly marked, makes a great figure in the sequel of the poem. His fierce, uncomplying character is sustained throughout. He seems, from a passage in the second book, to have been Cairbar's greatest confident, and to have had a principal hand in the conspiracy against Cormac, the usurping king of Ireland. His tribe was one of the most considerable of the race of the Firbolg. *M.*—Here Macpherson confounds the Firbolg with the Milesians, of which Cairbar (Prince O'Neill) was the chief. *C.*

† Mór-annal, *strong-breath;* a very proper name for a scout.

from streamy Moi-lena. His eyes hang forward from his face. His lips trembling, pale!

"Do the chiefs of Erin stand," he said, "silent as the grove of evening? Stand they, like a silent wood, and Fingal on the coast? Fingal, who is terrible in battle, the king of streamy Morven!" "Hast thou seen the warrior?" said Cairbar with a sigh. "Are his heroes many on the coast? Lifts he the spear of battle? Or comes the king in peace?" "In peace he comes not, king of Erin! I have seen his forward spear*. It is a meteor of death. The blood of thousands is on its steel. He came first to the shore, strong in the grey hair of age. Full rose his sinewy limbs, as he strode in his might. That sword is by his side, which gives no second† wound. His shield is terrible, like the bloody moon, ascending through a storm. Then came Ossian, king of songs. Then Morni's son, the first of men. Connal leaps forward on his spear. Dermid spreads his dark-brown locks. Fillan bends his bow, the young hunter of streamy Moruth. But who is that before them, like the terrible course of a stream! It is the son of Ossian,

* Mór-annal here alludes to the particular appearance of Fingal's spear. If a man upon his first landing in a strange country, kept the point of his spear forward, it denoted in those days that he came in a hostile manner, and accordingly he was treated as an enemy; if he kept the point behind him, it was a token of friendship, and he was immediately invited to the feast, according to the hospitality of the times.

† This was the famous sword of Fingal, made by Luno, a smith of Lochlin, and after him poetically called the *son of Luno*: it is said of this sword, that it killed a man at every stroke; and that Fingal never used it but in times of the greatest danger.

bright between his locks! His long hair falls on his back. His dark brows are half-inclosed in steel. His sword hangs loose on his side. His spear glitters as he moves. I fled from his terrible eyes, king of high Temora!"*

"Then fly, thou feeble man," said Foldath's gloomy wrath. "Fly to the grey streams of thy land, son of the little soul! Have not I seen that Oscar? I beheld the chief in war. He is of the mighty in danger: but there are others who lift the spear. Erin has many sons as brave, king of Temora of Groves! Let Foldath meet him in his strength. Let me stop this mighty stream. My spear is covered with blood. My shield is like the wall of Tura!"

"Shall Foldath † alone meet the foe?" replied the dark-browed Malthos. "Are they not on our coast, like the waters of many streams? Are not these the chiefs, who vanquished Swaran, when the sons of green Erin fled? Shall Foldath meet their bravest hero? Foldath of the heart of pride! take the strength of the people! and let Malthos come. My sword is red with slaughter, but who has heard my words?"‡

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* To prove the consistency of the Poems, and my conclusions, we observe here, that Cairbar (O'Neill) is called the king of Temora; and not so much from the flattery of his herald, as truth, that title being his right in preference to the Caledonian chieftain whom, as the usurper of *his* crown, he had killed in the house of his father, at Connor-Temora. *C.*

† The opposite characters of Foldath and Malthos are strongly marked in subsequent parts of the poem. They appear always in opposition. The feuds between their families, which were the source of their hatred to one another, are mentioned in other poems.

‡ That is, who has heard my vaunting? He intended the expression as a rebuke to the self-praise of Foldath.

"Sons of green Erin," said Hidàlla*, "let not Fingàl hear your words. The foe might rejoice, and his arm be strong in the land. Ye are brave, O warriors! Ye are tempests in war. Ye are, like storms, which meet the rocks without fear, and overturn the woods. But let us move in our strength, slow as a gathered cloud! Then shall the mighty tremble; the spear shall fall from the hand of the valiant. We see the cloud of death, they will say, while shadows fly over their face. Fingal will mourn in his age. He shall behold his flying fame. The steps of his chiefs will cease in Morven. The moss of years shall grow in Selma."

Cairbar heard their words, in silence, like the cloud of a shower: it stands dark on Cromla, till the lightning bursts its side. The valley gleams with heaven's flame; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora; at length his words broke forth. "Spread the feast on Moi-lena. Let my hundred bards attend. Thou red-haired Olla, take the harp of the king. Go to Oscar chief of swords. Bid Oscar to our joy. To-day we feast and hear the song, to-morrow break the spears! Tell him that I have raised the tomb of Cathol †; that bards gave his friend to

* Hidalla was the chief of Clonra, a small district on the banks of the lake of Lego. The beauty of his person, his eloquence, and genius for poetry, are afterwards mentioned. Clonra has sunk into oblivion. *C.*

† Cathol the son of Maronnan, or Moran, was murdered by Cairbar, for his attachment to the family of Cormac. He had attended Oscar to the *war of Inisthona*, where they contracted a great friendship for one another. Oscar, immediately after the death of Cathol, had sent a formal challenge to Cairbar, which he prudently declined, but conceived a secret hatred against Oscar, and had beforehand contrived to kill him at the feast to which he here invites him.

the winds. Tell him that Cairbar has heard of his fame, at the stream of resounding Carun *. Cathmor † my brother is not here. He is not here with his thousands, and our arms are weak. Cathmor is a foe to strife at the feast! His soul is bright as that sun! But Cairbar must fight with Oscar, chiefs of woody Temora! His words for Cathol were many: the wrath of Cairbar burns. He shall fall on Moi-lena. My fame shall rise in blood." ‡

* He alludes to the battle of Oscar against Caros, *king of ships;* who is supposed to be the same with Carausius the Roman usurper.

† Cathmor, *great in battle*, the son of Borbar-duthul, and brother of Cairbar king of Ireland, had, before the insurrection of the Firbolg, passed over into Inis-huna, supposed (but erroneously) to be part of South Britain, to assist Conmor king of that place against his enemies. Cathmor was successful in the war, but, in the course of it, Conmor was either killed, or died a natural death. Cairbar, upon intelligence of the designs of Fingal to dethrone him, had dispatched a messenger for Cathmor, who returned into Ireland a few days before the opening of the poem. *C. Vide data of the map.*

Cairbar here takes advantage of his brother's absence, to perpetrate his ungenerous designs against Oscar; for the noble spirit of Cathmor, had he been present, would not have permitted the laws of that hospitality, for which he was so renowned himself, to be violated. The brothers form a contrast: we do not detest the mean soul of Cairbar more than we admire the disinterested and generous mind of Cathmor. *M.*

‡ From this passage we discover sufficient to inform us that Cairbar, (ancestor of the present Earl O'Neill) King of Ulster, was now in a situation to assert and maintain his right to the throne of his progenitors, which had been long occupied by the traitorous friends of Fingal, whose power was evidently on the decline in Emania or Connor, and its principality or kingdom. The prophetical part of the speech of Hidalla was soon realized in Morven. *C.*

Their faces brightened round with joy, They spread over Moi-lena*. The feast of shells is prepared. The songs of bards arise. The chiefs of Selma heard their joy†. We thought that mighty Cathmor came. Cathmor the friend of strangers! the brother of red-haired Cairbar. Their souls were not the same.

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* This proves that the protection or assistance which Fingal rendered his young kinsman, of the race of Trathal, was the cause of all his journies to Ireland, and that the protection necessary to give to his capital Temora, was the cause of all the battles which were fought in its neighbourhood—on Lena. *C.*

† Fingal's army heard the joy that was in Cairbar's camp. The character given of Cathmor is agreeable to the times. Some, through ostentation, were hospitable; and others fell naturally into a custom handed down from their ancestors. But what marks strongly the character of Cathmor, is his aversion to praise; for he is represented to dwell in a wood to avoid the thanks of his guests; which is still a higher degree of generosity than that of Axylus in Homer: for the poet does not say, but the good man might, at the head of his own table, have heard with pleasure the praise bestowed on him by the people he entertained.

No nation in the world carried hospitality to a greater length than the ancient Scots. It was even infamous, for many ages, in a man of condition, to have the door of his house shut at all, LEST, as the bards express it, THE STRANGER SHOULD COME AND BEHOLD HIS CONTRACTED SOUL. Some of the chiefs were possessed of this hospitable disposition to an extravagant degree: and the bards, perhaps upon a private account, never failed to recommend it, in their eulogiums. *Cean niu' na dai'* or *the point to which all the roads of the strangers lead,* was an invariable epithet given by them to the chiefs; on the contrary, they distinguished the inhospitable by the title of *the cloud which the strangers shun.* This last, however, was so uncommon, that in all the old poems I have ever met with, I found but one man branded with this ignominious appellation; and that, perhaps, only founded upon a private quarrel, which subsisted between him and the patron of the bard, who wrote the poem.

The light of heaven was in the bosom of Cathmor. His towers rose on the banks of Atha; * seven paths led to his halls. Seven chiefs stood on the paths, and called the stranger to the feast! But Cathmor dwelt in the wood, to shun the voice of praise!

Olla came with his songs. Oscar went to Cairbar's feast. Three hundred warriors strode along Moi-lena of the streams. The grey dogs bounded on the heath: Their howling reached afar. Fingal saw the departing hero. The soul of the king was sad. He dreaded Cairbar's gloomy thoughts, amid the feast of shells. My son raised high the spear of Cormac. An hundred bards met him with songs. Cairbar concealed, with smiles, the death that was dark in his soul. The feast is spread. The shells resound. Joy brightens the face of the host. But it was like the parting beam of the sun, when he is to hide his red head in a storm!

Cairbar rises in his arms. Darkness gathers on his brow. The hundred harps cease at once. The clang † of shields is heard. Far distant on the heath Olla raised a song of woe. My son knew the sign of death; and rising seized his spear. "Oscar," said the dark-red Cairbar, "I behold the spear ‡ of Erin. The

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* Lough Neagh, and Shanes Castle.—This is a correct and beautiful description of the ancient magnificence and hospitality of the O'Neills. Shanes Castle stands on the Banks of Lough Neagh, the Lake of Roes of Ossian—The Irish Bards call it Lake Aidha, or Atha, from one of the O'Neill princes having been drowned there. *C.*

† When a chief was determined to kill a person already in his power, it was usual to signify that his death was intended, by the sound of a shield struck with the blunt end of a spear; at the same time that a bard at a distance raised the *death song*.

‡ Cormac, the son of Arth, had given the spear, which is here the foundation of the quarrel, to Oscar, when he came to congratulate him upon Swaran's being expelled from Ireland.

spear of Temora * glitters in thy hand, son of woody Morven! It was the pride of an hundred † kings. The death of heroes of old. Yield it, son of Ossian, yield it to car-borne Cairbar!"

"Shall I yield," Oscar replied, "the gift of Erin's injured king: the gift of fair-haired Cormac, when Oscar scattered his foes? I came to Cormac's halls of joy, when Swaran fled from Fingal. Gladness rose in the face of youth. He gave the spear of Temora. Nor did he give it to the feeble: neither to the weak in soul. The darkness of thy face is no storm to me: nor are thine eyes the flame of death. Do I fear thy clanging shield? Tremble I at Olla's song? No: Cairbar, frighten the feeble; Oscar is a rock!

"Wilt thou not yield the spear?" replied the rising pride of Cairbar. "Are thy words so mighty, because Fingal is near? Fingal with aged locks, from Morven's hundred groves! He has fought with little men. But he must vanish before Cairbar, like a thin pillar of mist before the winds of Atha ‡!" "Were he who

* Ti' mòr-i', *the house of the great king*, now, Connor, the name of the royal palace of the supreme kings of Ireland. *M.*—No! rather of the Caledonian chief, or king, whose territory was bounded on the east by the Legon River, on the west by the Bann, on the north by the Irish sea, and on the south by Lochneagh! *C.*—*Vide* data of the map.

† *Hundred* here is an indefinite number, and is only intended to express a great many. It was probably the hyperbolical phrases of bards that gave the first hint to the Irish Senachies to place the origin of their monarchy in so remote a period as they have done.

‡ Atha, *shallow river*: the name of Cairbar's seat in Connaught. *M.* No!—not in Connaught, but in Ulster, in the county of Antrim, on the banks of Loch Neagh, (Lake of Roes) and nearly on the banks of one of its tributaries, called the Main-water. *C.*

fought with little men, near Atha's haughty chief: Atha's chief would yield green Erin to avoid his rage! Speak not of the mighty, O Cairbar! Turn thy sword on me. Our strength is equal: but Fingal is renowned! the first of mortal men!"

Their people saw the darkening chiefs. Their crowding steps are heard around. Their eyes roll in fire. A thousand swords are half unsheathed. Red-haired Olla raised the song of battle. The trembling joy of Oscar's soul arose: the wonted joy of his soul when Fingal's horn was heard. Dark as the swelling wave of ocean before the rising winds, when it bends its head near the coast, came on the host of Cairbar!

Daughter of Toscar *! why that tear? He is not fallen yet. Many were the deaths of his arm before my hero fell!

Behold they fall before my son, like groves in the desert; when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand! Morlath falls. Maronnan dies. Conachar trembles in his blood; Cairbar shrinks before Oscar's sword! He creeps in darkness behind a stone. † He lifts the spear

* Malvina, the daughter of Toscar, to whom is addressed that part of the poem which related to the death of Oscar her lover.

† The prejudice of Macpherson is here intollerable, as it is obvious and absurd! Why such an ungenerous foe to Ireland, thou partial and prejudiced translator? Had Cairbar crouched or crept behind a stone—How could he be hand in hand in *single* combat with Oscar?—or why did not Oscar make him prisoner whilst in that abject situation? Such absurdities and malevolent blunders as these diminish thine own fame, and excite doubts of the authenticity of thy authors? The race of O'Neill is undeservedly stigmatized by a partial translator whose prejudice would disgrace the lowest Scotsman.—" O'Neill never turned his back on friend or foe," is as just as it is an universal proverb. *C.*

in secret; he pierces my Oscar's side! He falls forward on his shield: his knee sustains the chief: But still his spear is in his hand. See gloomy Cairbar* falls! The steel pierced his forehead, and divided his red hair behind. He lay, like a shattered rock, which

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* The Irish historians place the death of Cairbar, in the latter end of the third century: they say, he was killed in battle against Oscar the son of Ossian, but deny that he fell by his hand.

It is, however, certain, that the Irish bards disguise, in some measure, this part of their history. An Irish poem on this subiect, which, undoubtedly, was the source of their information, concerning the battle of Gabbra, where Cairbar fell, is just now in my hands. As a translation of the poem (which, tho' evidently no very ancient composition, does not want poetical merit) would extend this note to too great a length, I shall only give the story of it in brief, with some extracts from the original Irish.

Oscar, says the Irish bard, was invited to a feast, at Temora, by Cairbar king of Ireland. A dispute arose between the two heroes, concerning the exchange of spears, which was usually made, between the guests and their host, upon such occasions. In the course of their altercation, Cairbar said, in a boastful manner, that he would hunt on the hills of Albion, and carry the spoils of it into Ireland, in spite of all the efforts of its inhabitants. The original words are;

Briathar buan sin; Briathar buan
A bheireadh an Cairbre rua',
Gu tuga' se sealg, agus creach
A h' ALBIN an la'r na mhaireach.

Oscar replied, that, the next day, he himself would carry into Albion the spoils of the five provinces of Ireland; in spite of the opposition of Cairbar.

Briathar eile an aghai' sin
A beeirea' an t' Oscar òg, calma
Gu'n tugadh sealg agus creach
Do dh' ALBIN an la'r na mhaireach, &c.

Oscar, in consequence of his threats, began to lay waste Ireland; but, as he returned with the spoil into Ulster, thro the narrow

Cromla shakes from its craggy side; when the green-vallied Erin shakes its mountains, from sea to sea!

But never more shall Oscar rise! He leans on his bossy shield. His spear is in his terrible hand. Erin's sons stand distant and dark. Their shouts arise, like crowded streams. Moi-lena echoes wide. Fingal heard the sound. He took the spear of Selma. His steps are before us on the heath. He spoke the words of woe. "I hear the noise of war. Young Oscar is alone. Rise, sons of Morven: join the hero's sword!"

Ossian rushed along the heath. Fillan bounded over Moi-lena *. Fingal strode in his strength. The light of his shield is terrible. The sons of Erin saw it far distant. They trembled in their souls. They knew that the wrath of the king arose: and they foresaw their death. We first arrived. We fought. Erin's chiefs withstood our rage. But when the king came,

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pass of Gabhra *(Caoil ghlen Ghabhra)* he was met by Cairbar, and a battle ensued, in which both the heroes fell by mutual wounds. The bard gives a very curious list of the followers of Oscar, as they marched to battle. They appear to have been five hundred in number, commanded, as the poet expresses it, by *five heroes of the blood of kings*. This poem mentions Fingal, as arriving from Scotland, before Oscar died of his wounds. *M.*—The Irish chronologists have here fallen into an error of at least a century.—The battle of Gowra or Gabhra, should be placed A. D. 384, instead of A. D. 284. *C.*

* Moi-lena is still the name of a part of the heath of Lena, and extends from the mountain to the banks of Lochneagh, the lake of Roes of Ossian, near Antrim. From this description, I presume that the narrow pass of Gabhra is that opening or valley between the hills above Belfast to the south-west, which leads to Antrim and Moi-lena.—This conjecture is borne out by the context.—Erin fled over Moi-lena. *Vide* data of the map. *C.*

in the sound of his course, what heart of steel could stand! Erin fled over Moi-lena. Death pursued their flight. We saw Oscar on his shield. We saw his blood around. Silence darkened every face. Each turned his back and wept. The king strove to hide his tears. His grey beard whistled in the wind. He bends his head above the chief. His words are mixed with sighs.

"Art thou fallen, O Oscar! in the midst of thy course? The heart of the aged beats over thee! He sees thy coming wars! The wars which ought to come he sees! They are cut off from thy fame! When shall joy dwell at Selma? When shall grief depart from Morven? My sons fall by degrees: Fingal is the last of his race. My fame begins to pass away. Mine age will be without friends. I shall sit a grey cloud in my hall. I shall not hear the return of a son, in his sounding arms. Weep, ye heroes of Morven! never more shall Oscar rise!"

And they did weep, O Fingal! Dear was the hero to their souls. He went out to battle, and the foes vanished. He returned, in peace, amidst their joy. No father mourned his son slain in youth: no brother his brother of love. They fell, without tears, for the chief of the people is low! Bran * is howling at his feet: gloomy Luäth is sad, for he had often led them to the chase; to the bounding roe of the desert!

When Oscar saw his friends around, his heaving breast arose. "The groans," he said, "of aged chiefs: The howling of my dogs: The sudden bursts

* Bran was one of Fingal's dogs. Bran signifies *a mountain-stream*.

of the song of grief, have melted Oscar's soul. My soul, that never melted before. It was like the steel of my sword. Ossian, carry me to my hills! Raise the stones of my renown. Place the horn of a deer: place my sword by my side. The torrent hereafter may raise the earth: the hunter may find the steel and say, "This has been Oscar's sword, the pride of other years!" "Fallest thou, son of my fame! shall I never see thee, Oscar! When others hear of their sons; shall I not hear of thee? The moss is on thy four grey stones. The mournful wind is there. The battle shall be fought without thee. Thou shalt not pursue the dark-brown hinds. When the warrior returns from battles, and tells of other lands; "I have seen a tomb," he will say, "by the roaring stream, the dark dwelling of a chief. He fell by car-borne Oscar, the first of mortal men." I, perhaps, shall hear his voice. A beam of joy will rise in my soul."

Night would have descended in sorrow, and morning returned in the shadow of grief. Our chiefs would have stood, like cold dropping rocks on Moi-lena, and have forgot the war; did not the king disperse his grief, and raise his mighty voice. The chiefs, as new-awakened from dreams, lift up their heads around.

"How long on Moi-lena shall we weep? How long pour in Erin our tears? The mighty will not return. Oscar shall not rise in his strength. The valiant must fall in their day, and be no more known on their hills. Where are our fathers, O warriors! the chiefs of the times of old? They have set like stars that have shone. We only hear the sound of their praise. But they were renowned in their years: the terror of other times. Thus shall we pass away, in the day of our

fall. Then let us be renowned when we may; and leave our fame behind us, like the last beams of the sun, when he hides his red head in the west. The traveller mourns his absence, thinking of the flame of his beams. Ullin, my aged bard! take thou the ship of the king. Carry Oscar to Selma of harps. Let the daughters of Morven weep. We must fight in Erin, for the race of fallen Cormac. The days of my years begin to fail. I feel the weakness of my arm. My fathers bend from their clouds, to receive their grey-hair'd son. But, before I go hence, one beam of fame shall rise. My days shall end, as my years begun, in fame. My life shall be one stream of light to bards of other times!"

Ullin rais'd his white sails. The wind of the south came forth *. He bounded on the waves toward Selma. I remained in my grief, but my words were not heard. The feast is spread on Moi-lena. An hundred heroes reared the tomb of Cairbar. No song is raised over the chief. His soul had been dark and bloody. The bards remembered the fall of Cormac! what could they say in Cairbar's praise?

Night came rolling down. The light of an hundred oaks arose. Fingal sat beneath a tree. Old Althan † stood in the midst. He told the tale of fallen Cormac. Althan the son of Conachar, the friend of car-borne

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* This is as beautifully described as it is truly natural. The *south wind* being directly fair from Lego's Lake to Morven. C.

† Althan, the son of Conachar, was the chief bard of Arth king of Ireland. After the death of Arth, Althan attended his son Cormac, and was present at his death. He had made his escape from Cairbar, by the means of Cathmor, and coming to Fingal, related, as here, the death of his master Cormac.

Cuthullin. He dwelt with Cormac in windy Temora, when Semo's son fell at Lego's stream. The tale of Althan was mournful. The tear was in his eye, when he spoke.

* "The setting sun was yellow on Dora †. Grey evening began to descend. Temora's woods shook with the blast of the unconstant wind. A cloud gathered in the west. A red star looked from behind its edge. I stood in the wood alone. I saw a ghost on the darkening air! His stride extended from hill to hill. His shield was dim on his side. It was the son of Semo. I knew the warrior's face. But he passed away in his blast; and all was dark around! My soul was sad. I went to the hall of shells. A thousand lights arose. The hundred bards had strung the harp. Cormac stood in the midst, like the morning-star, when it rejoices on the eastern hill, and its young beams are bathed in showers. Bright and silent is its progress aloft, but the cloud, that shall hide it, is near! The sword of Artho ‡ was in the hand of the king. He looked with joy on its polished studs: thrice he attempted to draw it, and thrice he failed; his yellow locks are spread on his shoulders! his cheeks of youth are red. I mourned over the beam of youth, for he was soon to set!"

"Althan!" he said with a smile, "didst thou be-

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* Althan speaks. *M.*—Another *Irish Bard. C.*

† Dora, *the woody side of a mountain;* it is here a hill in the neighbourhood of Temora. *M.*—And nothing can be more natural and just than the remark of the setting sun on Dora, which still bears its ancient name, and is about three miles from Connor. *C.*

‡ Arth, or Artho, the father of Cormac king of Ireland. *M.*—Of the usurping race. *C.*

hold my father? Heavy is the sword of the king; surely his arm was strong. O that I were like him in battle, when the rage of his wrath arose! then would I have met with Cuthullin, the car-borne son of Cantéla! But years may come on, O Althan! and my arm be strong. Hast thou heard of Semo's son, the ruler of high Temora? He might have returned with his fame. He promised to return to-night. My bards wait him with songs. My feast is spread in the hall of kings."

I heard Cormac in silence. My tears began to flow. I hid them with my aged locks. The king perceived my grief. "Son of Conachar!" he said, "is the son of Semo * low? Why bursts the sigh in secret? Why descends the tear? Comes the car-borne Torlath? Comes the sound of red-haired Cairbar? They come! for I behold thy grief. Mossy Tura's chief is low! Shall I not rush to battle? But I cannot lift the spear! O had mine arm the strength of Cuthullin, soon would Cairbar fly; the fame of my fathers would be renewed; and the deeds of other times!"

He took his bow. The tears flow down, from both his sparkling eyes. Grief saddens round. The bards bend forward, from their hundred harps. The lone blast touched their trembling strings. The sound † is

* Cuthullin is called the king of Tura from a castle of that name on the coast of Ulster, (Carrickfergus) where he dwelt, before he undertook the management of the affairs of Ireland, in the minority of Cormac. *M.*—And afterwards. *C.*

† That prophetic sound, mentioned in other poems, which the harps of the bards emitted before the death of a person worthy and renowned. It is here an omen of the death of Cormac, which, soon after, followed.

sad and low! A voice is heard at a distance, as of one in grief. It was Carril of other times, who came from dark Slimora. He told of the fall of Cuthullin. He told of his mighty deeds. The people were scattered round his tomb. Their arms lay on the ground They had forgot the war, for he, their fire, was seen no more!

"But who," said the soft-voiced Carril, "who come like bounding roes? Their stature is like young trees in the valley, growing in a shower! Soft and ruddy are their cheeks! Fearless souls look forth from the eyes! Who but the sons of Usnoth*, chief of streamy Etha? The people rise on every side, like the strength of an half-extinguished fire, when the winds come, sudden, from the desert, on their rustling wings. Sudden glows the dark brow of the hill; the passing mariner lags, on his winds. The sound of Caithbat's † shield was heard. The warriors saw Cuthullin ‡ in Nathos. So rolled his sparkling eyes!

* Usnoth chief of Etha, a district on the western coast of Scotland, had three sons, Nathos, Althos, and Ardan, by Slissáma the sister of Cuthullin. The three brothers, when very young, were sent over to Ireland by their father, to learn the use of arms under their uncle, whose military fame was very great in that kingdom. They had just arrived in Ulster when the news of Cuthullin's death arrived. Nathos, the eldest of the three brothers, took the command of Cuthullin's army, and made head against Cairbar the chief of Atha. Cairbar having, at last, murdered young king Cormac, at Temora, the army of Nathos shifted sides, and the brothers were obliged to return into Ulster, in order to pass over into Scotland. The sequel of their mournful story is related, at large, in the poem of Darthula.

† Caithbait was grandfather to Cuthullin; and his shield was made use of to alarm his posterity to the battles of the family.

‡ That is, they saw a manifest likeness between the person of Nathos and Cuthullin.

his steps were such on heath! Battles are fought at Lego. The sword of Nathos prevails. Soon shalt thou behold him in thy halls, king of Temora of groves!"

"Soon may I behold the chief!" replied the blue-eyed king. "But my soul is sad for Cuthullin. His voice was pleasant in mine ear. Often have we moved, on Dora, to the chase of the dark-brown hinds. His bow was unerring on the hills. He spoke of mighty men. He told of the deeds of my fathers. I felt my rising joy. But sit thou at the feast, O Carril! I have often heard thy voice. Sing in praise of Cuthullin. Sing of Nathos of Etha *!"

Day rose on Temora, with all the beams of the east. Crathin came to the hall, the son of old Gelláma †. "I behold," he said, "a cloud in the desert, king of Erin? a cloud it seemed at first, but now a crowd of men! One strides before them in his strength. His red hair flies in wind. His shield glitters to the beam of the east. His spear is in his hand." "Call him to the feast of Temora," replied the brightening king. "My hall is the house of strangers, son of generous Gelláma! It is perhaps the chief of Etha, coming in all his renown. Hail, mighty ‡ stranger! art thou of

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* Nathos the son Usnoth.

† Geal-lamha, *white-handed.*

‡ From this expression, we understand, that Cairbar had entered the palace of Temora, in the midst of Cormac's speech. *M.* Macpherson has taken great pains to evade the true story, namely, that this Cairbar who murdered young Cormac, was the rightful heir to the throne of Temora—which was unjustly kept from him and his ancestors from the time it was first usurped by Connor, till that period, by the forces of Fingal on one hand, and the lately settled Belgæ in the south upon the other. *C.*

the friends of Cormac? But Carril, he is dark, and unlovely. He draws his sword. Is that the son of Usnoth, bard of the times of old?"

"It is not the son of Usnoth!" said Carril. "It is Cairbar thy foe. Why comest thou in thy arms to Temora? chief of the gloomy brow. Let not thy sword rise against Cormac! Whither dost thou turn thy speed?" He passed on in darkness. He seized the hand of the king. Cormac foresaw his death; the rage of his eyes arose. "Retire, thou chief of Atha! * Nathos comes with war. Thou art bold in Cormac's hall, for his arm is weak." The sword entered the side of the king. He fell in the halls of his fathers. His fair hair is in the dust. His blood is smoaking round.

"Art thou fallen in thy halls?" said Carril. "O son of noble Artho? The shield of Cuthullin was not near. Nor the spear of thy father. Mournful are the mountains of Erin, for the chief of the people is low! Blest be thy soul, O Cormac! Thou art darkened in thy youth."

His words came to the ears of Cairbar. He closed † us in the midst of darkness. He feared to stretch his sword to the bards ‡, though his soul was dark. Long

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* By this I am borne out in the idea, that Cairbar, chief of Atha, was ancestor of the present family of O'Neill of Shanes castle—during many centuries the *rightful* kings of Ulster, whose lands and throne had been usurped by Connor, of Caledonia, during the minority of his ancestor. *C.*

† That is, himself and Carril, as it afterwards appears.

‡ The persons of the bards were so sacred, that even he, who had just murdered his sovereign, feared to kill them. *M.*—The person killed was *not* Cairbar's sovereign but the *usurper* of his crown! *C.*

"

we pined alone! At length the noble Cathmor* came. He heard our voice from the cave †. He turned the eye of his wrath on Cairbar.

"Brother of Cathmor," he said, "how long wilt thou pain my soul? Thy heart is a rock. Thy thoughts are dark and bloody! But thou art the brother of Cathmor; and Cathmor shall shine in thy war. But my soul is not like thine: thou feeble hand in fight! The light of my bosom is stained with thy deeds. Bards will not sing of my renown: They may say, "Cathmor was brave, but he fought for gloomy Cairbar." They will pass over my tomb in silence. My fame shall not be heard. Cairbar! loose the bards. They are the sons of future times. Their voice shall be heard in other years; after the kings of Temora have failed. We came forth at the words of the chief. We saw him in his strength. He was like thy youth, O Fingal! when thou first didst lift the spear. His face was like the plain of the sun, when it is bright. No darkness travelled over his brow. But he came with his thousands to aid the red-haired Cairbar. Now he comes to revenge his death, O king of woody Morven!"

"Let Cathmor come," replied the king. "I love a foe so great. His soul is bright. His arm is strong.

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* Cathmor appears the same disinterested hero upon every occasion. His humanity and generosity were unparalleled: in short, he had no fault, but too much attachment to so bad a brother as Cairbar. His family connection with Cairbar prevails, as he expresses it, over every other consideration, and makes him engage in a war, of which he does not approve.

† There are several large and spacious caves around Connor-Temora. *C.*

His battles are full of fame. But the little soul is a vapour that hovers round the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds should meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave, it sends forth the dart of death! Our young heroes, O warriors! are like the renown of our fathers. They fight in youth. They fall. Their names are in song. Fingal is amid his darkening years. He must not fall, as an aged oak, across a secret stream. Near it are the steps of the hunter, as it lies beneath the wind. "How is that tree fallen?" he says, and, whistling, strides along. Raise the song of joy, ye bards of Morven! Let our souls forget the past. The red stars look on us from clouds, and silently descend. Soon shall the grey beam of the morning rise, and shew us the foes of Cormac. Fillan! my son, take thou the spear of the king. Go to Mora's dark-brown side *. Let thine eyes travel over the heath. Observe the foes of Fingal: Observe the course of generous Cathmor. I hear a distant sound, like falling rocks in the desert. But strike thou thy shield at times, that they may not come thro' night, and the fame of Morven cease. I begin to be alone, my son. I dread the fall of my renown!"

The voice of bards arose. The king leaned on the shield of Trenmor. Sleep descended on his eyes. His future battles arose in his dreams. The host are sleeping around. Dark-haired Fillan observes the foe. His steps are on a distant hill. We hear, at times, his clanging shield.

* *Vide* the map. *C.*

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK II.

This book opens, we may suppose, about midnight, with a soliloquy of Ossian, who had retired, from the rest of the army, to mourn for his son Oscar. Upon hearing the noise of Cathmor's army approaching, he went to find out his brother Fillan, who kept the watch on the hill of Mora, in the front of Fingal's army. In the conversation of the brothers, the episode of Conar, the son of Trenmor, who was the first king of Ireland, is introduced, which lays open the origin of the contests between the Cael and Firbolg, the two nations who first possessed themselves of that Island. Ossian kindles a fire on Mora; upon which Cathmor desisted from the design he had formed of surprizing the army of the Caledonians. He calls a council of his chiefs; reprimands Foldath for advising a night attack, as the Irish army were so much superior in number to the enemy. The bard Fonar introduces the story of Crothar, the ancestor of the king, which throws further light on the history of Ireland, and the original pretensions of the family of Atha, to the throne of that kingdom. The Irish chiefs lie down to rest, and Cathmor himself undertakes the watch. In this circuit, round the army, he is met by Ossian. The interview of the two heroes is described. Cathmor obtains a promise from Ossian, to order a funeral elegy to be sung over the grave of Cairbair: it being the opinion of the times, that the souls of the dead could not be happy, till their elegies were sung by a bard. Morning comes. Cathmor and Ossian part: and the latter, casually meeting with Carril the son of Kinfena, sends that bard, with a funeral song, to the tomb of Cairbair.

TEMORA.

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK II.

FATHER* of heroes! O Trenmor! High dweller of eddying winds! where the dark-red thunder marks the troubled clouds! Open thou thy stormy halls. Let the bards of old be near. Let them draw near, with songs and their half-viewless harps. No dweller of the misty valley comes! No hunter unknown at his streams! It is the car-borne Oscar, from the fields of war. Sudden is thy change my son, from what thou wert on dark Moi-lena! The blast folds thee in its

* Though this book has little action, it is not the least important part of Temora. The poet, in several episodes, runs up the cause of the war to the very source. The first population of Ireland, the wars between the two nations who originally possessed that island, its first race of kings, and the revolutions of its government, are important facts, and are delivered by the poet, with so little mixture of the fabulous, than one cannot help preferring his accounts to the improbable fictions of the Scotch and Irish historians. The Milesian fables bear about them the marks of a late invention. To trace their legends to their source would be no difficult task; but a disquisition of this sort would extend this note too far.

skirt, and rustles through the sky! Dost thou not behold thy father, at the stream of night? The chiefs of Morven sleep far distant. They have lost no son! But ye have lost a hero, chiefs of resounding Morven! Who could equal his strength, when battle rolled against his side, like the darkness of crowded waters? Why this cloud on Ossian's soul? It ought to burn in danger. Erin is near with her host. The king of Selma is alone. Alone thou shalt not be, my father, while I can lift the spear!

I rose, in all my arms. I rose and listened to the wind. The shield of Fillan* is not heard. I tremble for the son of Fingal. "Why should the foe come by night? Why should the dark-haired warrior fail?" Distant, sullen murmurs rise: like the noise of the lake of Lego, when its waters shrink, in the days of frost, and all its bursting ice resounds. The people of

* We understaud, from the preceding book, that Cathmor was near with an army. When Cairbar was killed, the tribes who attended him fell back to Cathmor; who, as it afterwards appears, had taken a resolution to surprize Fingal by night. Fillan was dispatched to the hill of *Mora*, which was in the front of the Caledonians, to observe the motions of Cathmor. In this situation were affairs when Ossian, upon hearing the noise of the approaching enemy, went to find out his brother. Their conversation naturally introduces the episode, concerning *Conar* the son Trenmor, the first Irish monarch, which is so necessary to the understanding the foundation of the rebellion and usurpation of Cairbar and Cathmor. Fillan was the youngest of the sons of Fingal, then living. He and Bosmina, mentioned in the *battle of Lora*, were the only children of the king, by Clatho the daughter of Cathulla king of Inis-tore, whom he had taken to wife after the death of Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac Mac-Conar king of Ireland. *M.*—But why not give the world the true story of Conar's assumption of Ireland?—*C.*

Lara look to heaven and foresee the storm! My steps are forward on the heath. The spear of Oscar in my hand! Red stars looked from high. I gleamed, along the night.

I saw Fillan silent before me, bending forward from *Mora's* rock.* He heard the shout of the foe. The joy of his soul arose. He heard my sounding tread, and turned his lifted spear. "Comest thou, son of night, in peace? Or dost thou meet my wrath? The foes of Fingal are mine. Speak, or fear my steel. I stand not, in vain, the shield of Morven's race." "Never mayst thou stand in vain, son of blue-eyed Clatho! Fingal begins to be alone. Darkness gathers on the last of his days. Yet he has two sons † who ought to shine in war. Who ought to be two beams of light, near the steps of his departure."

"Son of Fingal," replied the youth, "it is not long since I raised the spear. Few are the marks of my sword in war. But Fillan's soul is fire! The chiefs

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* This alludes to the hill of *Mora*, above Conor-Temora.—*C.*

† That is, two sons in Ireland. Fergus, the second son of Fingal, was, at that time, on an expedition, which is mentioned in one of the lesser poems. He, according to some traditions, was the ancestor of Fergus, the son of Erc or Arcath, commonly called *Fergus the second* in the Scotch histories. The beginning of the reign of Fergus over the Scots, is placed, by the most approved annals of Scotland, in the fourth year of the fifth age; a full century after the death of Ossian. The genealogy of his family is recorded thus by the Highland Senachies; *Fergus Mac-Arcath, Mac-Chongael, Mac-Fergus, Mac-Fion-gäel na buai*; *i. e.* Fergus the son of Arcath, the son of Congal, the son of Fergus, the son of Fingal *the victorious*. This subject is treated more at large, in the Dissertation annexed to the poem.

of Bolga* crowd around the shield of generous Cathmor. Their gathering is on that heath. Shall my steps approach their host? I yielded to Oscar alone, in the strife of the race, on Cona!"

"Fillan, thou shalt not approach their host; nor fall before thy fame is known. My name is heard in song: when needful I advance. From the skirts of night I shall view them over all their gleaming tribes. Why, Fillan, didst thou speak of Oscar! Why awake my sigh? I must forget † the warrior, till the storm is rolled away. Sadness ought not to dwell in danger, nor the tear in the eye of war. Our fathers forgot their fallen sons, till the noise of arms was past. Then sorrow returned to the tomb, and the song of bards arose." The memory of those who fell, quickly followed the departure of war: When the tumult of battle is past, the soul, in silence, melts away, for the dead.

Conar‡ was the brother of Trathal, first of mortal

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* The southern parts of Ireland went, for some time, under the name of Bolga, from the Fir-bolg or Belgæ of Britain, who settled a colony there. *Bolg* signifies a *quiver*, from which proceeds *Fir-bolg*, i. e. *bowmen;* so called from their using bows more than any of the neighbouring nations.

† After this passage, Oscar is not mentioned in all Temora, The situations of the characters who act in the poem are so interesting, that others, foreign to the subject could not be introduced with any lustre. Though the episode, which follows, may seem to flow naturally enough from the conversation of the brothers, yet I have shewn, in a preceding note, and, more at large, in the Dissertation annexed to this collection, that the poet had a farther design in view.

‡ Conar, the first king of Ireland, was the son of Trenmor, the great-grand-father of Fingal. It was on account of this family connection, that Fingal was engaged in so many wars in the cause of the race of Conar. Though few of the actions of Trenmor

men. His battles were on every coast. A thousand streams rolled down the blood of his foes. His fame filled green Erin, like a pleasant gale. The nations gathered in Ullin, and they blessed the king; the king of the race of their fathers, from the land of Selma.*

The chiefs † of the south were gathered, in the darkness of their pride. In the horrid cave of Muma they mixed their secret words. Thither often, they said, the spirits of their fathers came; shewing their pale forms from the chinky rocks: reminding them of the honor of Bolga. "Why should Conar reign," they said, "the son of resounding Morven?"

They came forth, like the streams of the desert, with the roar of their hundred tribes. Conar was a rock before them: broken they rolled on every side.

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are mentioned, he was the most renowned name of antiquity. The most probable opinion concerning him is, that he was the first, who united the tribes of the Caledonians, and commanded them, in chief, against the incursions of the Romans. The genealogists of the North have traced his family far back, and given a list of his ancestors to *Cuan-mór nan lan*, or Conmor of the swords, who, according to them, was the first who crossed the *great sea*, to Caledonia, from which circumstance his name proceeded, which signifies *great ocean.* Genealogies of so ancient a date, however, are little to be depended upon.

* Here Macpherson omits the whole cause of Connor's visit to Ireland! I have, however, rescued the cause from oblivion, and inserted the true story, though it makes against the honour of Fingal's family. *Vide* data of the map. *C.*

† The chiefs of the Fir-bolg who possessed themselves of the south of Ireland, prior, perhaps, to the settlement of the *Caël* of Caledonia, and the Hebrides, in Ulster. From the sequel, it appears that the Fir-bolg were, by much, the most powerful nation; and it is probable that the Caël must have submitted to them, had they not received succours from their mother-country, under the command of Conar.

But often they returned, and the sons of Selma fell. The king stood, among the tombs of his warriors. He darkly bent his mournful face. His soul was rolled into itself: and he had marked the place where he was to fall: when Trathal came, in his strength, his brother from cloudy Morven. Nor did he come alone. Colgar* was at his side; Colgar the son of the king and of white-bosomed Solin-corma.

As Trenmor, cloathed with meteors, descends from the halls of thunder, pouring the dark storm before him over the troubled sea: so Colgar descended to battle, and wasted the echoing field. His father rejoiced over the hero: but an arrow came! His tomb was raised, without a tear. The king was to revenge his son. He lightened forward in battle, till Bolga yielded at her streams!

When peace returned to the land: When his blue waves bore the king to Morven: then he remembered his son, and poured the silent tear. Thrice did the bards, at the cave of Furmono, call the soul of Colgar. They called him to the hills of his land. He heard them in his mist. Trathal placed his sword in the cave, that the spirit of his son might rejoice.

"Colgar †, son of Trathal!" said Fillan, "thou

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* Colg-er, *fiercely looking warrior*. Sulin-corma, *b'ue eyes*

* Colgar was the eldest of the sons of Trathal: Comhal, who was the father of Fingal, was very young when the present expedition to Ireland happened. It is remarkable, that of all the ancestors of Fingal, tradition makes the least mentior of Comhal; which, probably, proceeded from the unfortunate life and untimely death of that hero. From some passages, concerning him, we learn indeed, that he was brave, but he wanted conduct.

† The poem begins here to mark strongly the character of Fillan, who is to make so great a figure in the sequel. He has the impatience, the ambition and fire which are peculiar to a

wert renowned in youth! But the king hath not marked my sword, bright-streaming on the field. I go forth with the crowd. I return, without my fame. But the foe approaches, Ossian! I hear their murmur on the heath. The sound of their steps is like thunder, in the bosom of the ground, when the rocking hills shake their groves, and not a blast pours from the darkened sky!"

Ossian turned sudden on his spear. He raised the flame of an oak on high. I spread it large, on Mora's wind. Cathmor stopt in his course. Gleaming he stood, like a rock, on whose sides are the wandering of blasts; which seize its echoing streams, and clothe them over with ice. So stood the friend * of strangers! The winds lift his heavy locks. Thou art the tallest of the race of Erin, king of streamy Atha!

"First of bards," said Cathmor. "Fonar † call, the chiefs of Erin. Call red-haired Cormar: dark-browed Malthos: the side-long-looking gloom of Maronan. Let the pride of Foldath appear. The red rolling eye of Turlotho. Nor let Hidalla be forgot; his voice, in danger, is the sound of a shower, when it falls in the blasted vale, near Atha's falling stream.

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young hero. Kindled with the fame of Colgar, he forgets his untimely fall. From Fillan's expressions in this passage, it would seem, that he was neglected by Fingal, on account of his youth.

* Cathmor is distinguished, by this honourable title, on account of his generosity to strangers, which was so great as to be remarkable even in those days of hospitality.

† *Fónar, the man of song.* Before the introduction of Christianity a name was not imposed upon any person, till he had distinguished himself by some remarkable action, from which his name should be derived.

Pleasant is its sound, on the plain, whilst broken thunder travels over the sky!"

They came, in their clanging arms. They bent forward to his voice, as if a spirit of their fathers spoke from a cloud of night. Dreadful shone they to the light; like the fall of the stream of Brumo * when the meteor lights it, before the nightly stranger. Shuddering, he stops in his journey, and looks up for the beam of the morn!

"Why † delights Foldath," said the king, "to pour the blood of foes by night? Fails his arm in battle, in the beams of day? Few are the foes before us, why should we clothe us in shades? The valiant delight to shine, in the battles of their land! Thy council was in vain, chief of Moma! The eyes of Morven do not sleep. They are watchful, as eagles, on their mossy rocks. Let each collect, beneath his cloud, the strength of his roaring tribe. To-morrow I move, in light, to meet the foes of Bolga? Mighty ‡ was he, that is low, the race of Borbar-Duthul!"

"Not unmarked!" said Foldath, "were my steps before thy race. In light, I met the foes of Cairbar. The warrior praised my deeds. But his stone was

* Brumo was a place of worship (Fing. b. 6.) in Craca, which is supposed to be one of the isles of Shetland. It was thought, that the spirits of the deceased haunted it, by night, which adds more terror to the description introduced here. *The horrid circle of Brumo, where often, they said, the ghosts of the dead howled round the stone of fear.*

† From this passage, it appears, that it was Foldath who had advised the night-attack. The gloomy character of Foldath is properly contrasted to the generous, the open Cathmor.

‡ By this exclamation Cathmor intimates that he intends to revenge the death of his brother Cairbar.

raised without a tear! No bard* sung over Erin's king. Shall his foes rejoice along their mossy hills? No: they must not rejoice! He was the friend of Foldath! Our words were mixed, in secret, in Moma's silent cave; whilst thou, a boy in the field, pursuedst the thistle's beard. With Moma's sons I shall rush abroad, and find the foe, on his dusky hills. Fingal shall lie, without his song, the grey-haired king of Selma."

"Dost thou think, thou feeble man," replied Cathmor, half-enraged: "Dost thou think Fingal can fall, without his fame, in Erin? Could the bards be silent at the tomb of Selma's king? The song would burst in secret! the spirit of the king would rejoice! It is when thou shalt fall, that the bard shall forget the song. Thou art dark, chief of Moma, though thine arm is a tempest in war. Do I forget the king of Erin, in his narrow house? My soul is not lost to Cairbar, the brother of my love! I marked the bright beams of joy, which travelled over his cloudy mind, when I returned, with fame, to Atha of the streams †.

Tall they removed, beneath the words of the king. Each to his own dark tribe; where, humming, they rolled on the heath, faint-glittering to the stars: like waves, in a rocky bay, before the nightly wind. Be-

* To have no funeral elegy sung over his tomb, was, among the Celtæ, reckoned the greatest misfortune that could befal a man; as his soul could not otherwise be admitted to the *airy hall of his fathers.*

† Atha is evidently the Shanes-castle of our times, belonging to the noble family of O'Neill, whose ancestors were kings of Ulster before the Christian *Era! C.*

neath an oak, lay the chief of Atha. His shield, a dusky round, hung high. Near him, against a rock, leaned the fair stranger * of Inis-huna: that beam of light, with wandering locks, from Lumon of the roes. At distance rose the voice of Fonar, with the deeds of the days of old. The song fails, at times, in Lubar's † growing roar!

"Crothar ‡," begun the bard, "first dwelt at Atha's mossy stream! A thousand § oaks, from the

* By *the stranger of Inis huna*, is meant Sulmalla, the daughter of Conmor king of Inis-huna, the ancient name of that part of South Britain, which is next to the Irish coast. She had followed Cathmor in disguise. Her story is related at large in the fourth book.

† *Lubar, vide* the data of the map.

‡ Crothar was the ancestor of Cathmor, and the first of his family, who had settled in Atha. It was in his time that the first wars were kindled between the Fir-bolg and Caël. The propriety of the episode is evident; as the contest which originally rose between Crothar and Conar, subsisted afterwards between their posterity, and was the foundation of the story of the poem.

§ From this circumstance we may learn, that the art of building with stone was not known in Ireland so early as the days of Crothar. When the colony were long settled in the country, the arts of civil life began to increase among them, for we find mention made of the *towers of Atha* in the time of Cathmor, which could not well be applied to wooden buildings. In Caledonia they begun very early to build with stone. None of the houses of Fingal, excepting Ti-foirmal, were of wood. Ti-foirmal was the great hall where the bards met to repeat their compositions annually, before they submitted them to the judgment of the king in Selma. By some accident or other, this wooden house happened to be burnt, and an ancient bard, in the character of Ossian, has left us a curious catalogue of the furniture which it contained. The poem is not just now in my hands, otherwise I would lay here a translation of it before the

mountains, formed his echoing hall. The gathering of the people was there, around the feast of the blue-eyed king. But who, among his chiefs, was like the stately Crothar? Warriors kindled in his presence. The young sigh of the virgins rose. In Alnecma* was the warrior honoured: the first of the race of Bolga.

"He pursued the chase in Ullin: on the moss-covered top of *Drumardo*. From the wood looked the daughter of Cathmin, the blue-rolling eye of Con-lama. Her sigh rose in secret. She bent her head, midst her wandering locks. The moon looked in, at night, and saw the white-tossing of her arms; for she thought of the mighty Crothar, in the season of dreams.

"Three days feasted Crothar with Cathmin. On the fourth they awaked the hinds. Con-lama moved to the chase, with all her lovely steps. She met Crothar in the narrow path. The bow fell at once from her hand. She turned her face away, and half-hid it with her locks. The love of Crothar rose. He brought the white-bosomed maid to Atha. Bards raised the song in her presence. Joy dwelt round the daughter of Cathmin.

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reader. It has little poetical merit, and evidently bears the marks of a later period.

* Alnecma, or Alnecmacht, was the ancient name of Connaught. Ullin is still the Irish name of the province of Ulster. To avoid the multiplying of notes, I shall here give the signification of the names in this episode. Drumardo, *high ridge*. Cathmin, *calm in battle*. Cón-lamha, *soft hand*. Turloch, *man of the quiver*. Cormul, *blue eye*. *M*—There is a hill in the immediate neighbourhood of Connor, which still goes by the name of *Drumardora*. *C.*

"The pride of Turloch rose, a youth who loved the white-handed Con-lama. He came, with battle, to Alnecma; to *Atha* of the *roes.** Cormul went forth to the strife, the brother of car-borne Crothar. He went forth, but he fell. The sigh of his people rose. Silent and tall, across the stream, came the darkening strength of Crothar: he rolled the foe from Alnecma. He returned, midst the joy of Con-lama.

"Battle on battle comes. Blood is poured on blood. The tombs of the valiant rise. Erin's clouds are hung round with ghosts. The chiefs of the south gathered round the echoing shield of Crothar. He came, with death, to the paths of the foe. The virgins wept, by the streams of Ullin. They looked to the mist of the hill: No hunter descended from its folds. Silence darkened in the land. Blasts sighed lonely on grassy tombs.

"Descending like the eagle of heaven, with all his rustling wings, when he forsakes the blast, with joy, the son of Trenmor came; Conar, arm of death, from Morven of the groves. He poured his might along green Erin. Death dimly strode behind his sword. The sons of Bolga fled, from his course, as from a stream, that bursting from the stormy desert, rolls the fields together with all their echoing woods. Crothar† met him in battle: but Alnecma's warriors

* I have every reason to believe that *Atha of the roes* is the same place now known as Shane's Castle, for many centuries the residence of the once powerful kings or chiefs O'Neal; now of their descendant the earl of that name, on the banks of Loch-neagh, Lake of Roes. *C.*

† The delicacy here, with regard to Crothar, is proper. As he was the ancestor of Cathmor, to whom the episode is ad-

fled. The king of Atha slowly retired, in the grief of his soul. He, afterwards, shone in the south; but dim as the sun of Autumn; when he visits, in his robes of mist, Lara of dark streams. The withered grass is covered with dew: the field, though bright, is sad."

"Why wakes the bard before me," said Cathmor, "the memory of those who fled? Has some ghost, from his dusky cloud, bent forward to thine ear; to frighten Cathmor from the field, with the tales of old? Dwellers of the skirts of night, your voice is but a blast to me; which takes the grey thistle's head, and strews its beard on streams. Within my bosom is a voice. Others hear it not. His soul forbids the king of Erin to shrink back from war."

Abashed the bard sinks back in night: retired he bends above a stream. His thoughts are on the days of Atha, when Cathmor heard his song with joy. His tears come rolling down. The winds are in his beard. ERIN sleeps around. No sleep comes down on Cathmor's eyes. Dark, in his soul, he saw the spirit of low-laid Cairbar. He saw him, without his song,

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dressed, the bard softens his defeat, by only mentioning that his *people fled*. Cathmor took the song of Fonar in an unfavourable light. The bards, being of the order of the Druids, who pretended to a foreknowledge of events, were supposed to have some supernatural prescience of futurity. The king thought, that the choice of Fonar's song proceeded from his foreseeing the unfortunate issue of the war; and that his own fate was shadowed out, in that of his ancestor Crothar. The attitude of the bard, after the reprimand of his patron, is picturesque and affecting. We admire the speech of Cathmor, but lament the effect it has on the feeling soul of the good old poet.

rolled in a blast of night. He rose. His steps were round the host. He struck, at times, his echoing shield. The sound reached Ossian's ear on Mora's mossy brow.

"Fillan," I said, "the foes advance. I hear the shield of war. Stand thou in the narrow path. Ossian shall mark their course. If over my fall the host should pour; then be thy buckler heard. Awake the king on his heath, lest his fame should fly away." I strode in all my rattling arms; wide-bounding over a stream that darkly-winded, in the field, before the king of Atha. Green Atha's king, with lifted spear, came forward on my course. Now would we have mixed in horrid fray, like two contending ghosts, that bending forward, from two clouds, send forth the roaring winds; did not Ossian behold, on high, the helmet of Erin's kings. The eagle's wing spread above it, rustling in the breeze. A red star looked thro' the plumes. I stopt the lifted spear.

"The helmet of kings is before me! Who art thou, son of night? Shall Ossian's spear be renowned, when thou art lowly-laid? At once he dropt the gleaming lance. Growing before me seemed the form. He stretched his hand in night. He spoke the words of kings.

"Friend of the spirits of heroes, do I meet thee thus in shades? I have wished for thy stately steps in Atha, in the days of joy. Why should my spear now arise? The sun must behold us, Ossian; when we bend, gleaming, in the strife. Future warriors shall mark the place: and, shuddering, think of other years. They shall mark it, like the haunt of ghosts, pleasant and dreadful to the soul."

"Shall it then be forgot," I said, "where we meet in peace? Is the remembrance of battles always pleasant to the soul? Do not we behold, with joy, the place where our fathers feasted? But our eyes are full of tears, on the fields of their war. This stone shall rise, with all its moss, and speak to other years. "Here Cathmor and Ossian met: the warriors met in peace!" When thou, O *stone,** shalt fail. When *Lubar's* stream shall roll away! then shall the traveller come, and bend here, perhaps, in rest. When the darkened moon is rolled over his head, our shadowy forms may come, and, mixing with his dreams, remind him of this place. But why turnest thou so dark away, son of Borbar-duthul †?"

"Not forgot, son of Fingal, shall WE ascend these winds. Our deeds are streams of light, before the eyes of bards. But darkness is rolled on Atha: the king is low, without his song; still there was a beam towards Cathmor from his stormy soul; like the moon, in a cloud, amidst the dark-red course of thunder."

"Son of Erin." I replied, "my wrath dwells not in his earth. ‡ My hatred flies, on eagle-wing, from the

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* I have made some observations on the many *stones*, on *Lena*, by *Lubar*, and in the neighbourhood of *Connor*, in the data of the map. C.

† Borbar-duthul, *the surly warrior of the dark brown eyes*. That his name suited well with his character, we may easily conceive, from the story delivered concerning him by Malthos, toward the end of the sixth book. He was the brother of that Colculla, who is mentioned in the episode which begins the fourth book.

‡ This reply abounds with the sentiments of a noble mind. Tho', of all men living, he was the most injured by Cairbar, yet he lays aside his rage as the *foe was low*. How different is this from the behaviour of the heroes of other ancient poems? *Cynthius aurem vellit.*

foe that is low. He shall hear the song of bards. Cairbar shall rejoice on his winds."

Cathmor's swelling soul arose. He took the dagger from his side, and placed it gleaming in my hand. He placed it, in my hand, with sighs, and, silent, strode away. Mine eyes followed his departure. He dimly gleamed, like the form of a ghost, which meets a traveller, by night on the dark-skirted heath. His words are dark like songs of old; with morning strides the unfinished shade away!

* Who comes from *Lubar's* vale? † from the skirts of the morning mist? The drops of heaven are on his head. His steps are in the paths of the sad. It is Carril of other times. He comes from Tura's silent cave. I behold it dark in the rock, through the thin folds of mist. There, perhaps, Cuthullin sits, on the blast which bends its trees. Pleasant is the song of the morning from the bard of Erin!

"The waves crowd away," said Carril. "They crowd away for fear. They hear the sound of thy coming forth, O sun! Terrible is thy beauty, son of heaven, when death is descending on thy locks: when thou rollest thy vapours before thee, over the blasted

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* The morning of the second day, from the opening of the poem, comes on. After the death of Cuthullin, Carril, the son of Kinfena, his bard, retired to the cave of Tura, which was in the neighbhourhood of Moi-lena, the scene of the poem of Temora. His casual appearance here enables Ossian to fulfil immediately the promise he had made to Cathmor, of causing the *funeral song* to be pronounced over the tomb of Cairbar. This book takes up only the space of a few hours.

† Ossian was on the hill of Mora, and Lubar's vale, and the whole breadth of *Lena* lay between him and *Tura* from which place Carril was on his way to *Temora-Connor*. C.

host. But pleasant is thy beam to the hunter, sitting by the rock in a storm, when thou shewest thyself from the parted cloud, and brightenest his dewy locks; he looks down on the streamy vale, and beholds the descent of roes! How long shalt thou rise on war, and roll, a bloody shield, through heaven? I see the deaths of heroes, dark-wandering over thy face!"

"Why wander the words of Carril?" I said. "Does the son of heaven mourn? He is unstained in his course, ever rejoicing in his fire. Roll on, thou careless light. Thou too, perhaps, must fall. Thy darkening hour may seize thee, struggling, as thou rollest through thy sky. But pleasant is the voice of the bard: pleasant to Ossian's soul! It is like the shower of the morning, when it comes through the rustling vale, on which the sun looks through mist, just rising from his rocks. But this is no time, O bard! to sit down, at the strife of song. Fingal is in arms on the vale. Thou seest the flaming shield of the king. His face darkens between his locks. He beholds the wide rolling of Erin. Does not Carril behold that tomb, beside the roaring stream? Three stones lift their grey heads, beneath a bending oak. A king is lowly laid! Give thou his soul to the wind. He is the brother of Cathmor! Open his airy hall! Let thy song be a stream of joy to Cairbar's darkened ghost!"

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK III.

Morning coming on, Fingal, after a speech to his people, devolves the command on Gaul, the son of Morni; it being the custom of the times, that the king should not engage, till the necessity of affairs required his superior valour and conduct. The king and Ossian retire to the rock of Cormul, which overlooked the field of battle. The bards sing the war-song. The general conflict is described. Gaul, the son of Morni, distinguishes himself, kills Turlathon, chief of Moruth, and other chiefs of lesser name. On the other hand, Foldath, who commanded the Irish army (for Cathmor, after the example of Fingal, kept himself from battle) fights gallantly; kills Connal, chief of *Dun-lora,** and advances to engage Gaul himself. Gaul, in the mean time, being wounded in the hand, by a random arrow, is covered by Fillan, the son of Fingal, who performs prodigies of valour. Night comes on. The horn of Fingal recalls his army. The bards meet them, with a congratulatory song, in which the praises of Gaul and Fillan are particularly celebrated. The chiefs sit down at a feast; Fingal misses Connal. The episode of Connal and Duth-caron is introduced; which throws further light on the ancient history of Ireland. Carril is dispatched to raise the tomb of Connal. The action of this book takes up the second day from the opening of the poem.

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* This is evidently the same hills or district called Dun-lora, at this day, near the seat of the lords of Antrim. Ossian or his translator occasionally called it *Lora. C.*

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK III.

WHO is that at blue-streaming Lubar? Who, by the bending hill of roes *? Tall, he leans on an oak torn from high, by nightly winds. Who but Comhal's son †, brightening in the last of his fields? His grey hair is on the breeze. He half unsheaths the sword of Luno. His eyes are turned to Moi-lena, to the dark moving of foes. Dost thou hear the voice of the king? It is like the bursting of a stream, in the desert, when it comes, between its echoing rocks, to the blasted field of the sun!

"Wide-skirted comes down the foe! Sons of woody Selma, arise! Be ye like the rocks of our land, on whose brown sides are the rolling of streams. A beam of joy comes on my soul. I see the foe mighty before me. It is when HE is feeble, that the sighs of Fingal are heard: lest death should come without renown, and darkness dwell on his tomb.

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* I take the hill now known by the name of Lisle-hill, which lies between *Cromla*, and the supposed *Crommal* on the heath of *Lena*, to have been the "Hill of Roes." *Vide* the map. *C.*

† Fingal was the son of Comhal. *C.*

Who shall lead the war, against the host of Alnecma? It is, only when danger grows, that my sword shall shine. Such was the custom, heretofore, of Trenmor the ruler of winds! and thus descended to battle the blue-shielded Trathal!

The chiefs bend toward the king. Each darkly seems to claim the war. They tell, by halves, their mighty deeds. They turn their eyes on Erin. But far before the rest the son of Morni stands. Silent he stands, for who had not heard of the battles of Gaul? They rose within his soul. His hand, in secret, seized the sword. The sword which he brought from Strumon, when the strength of Morni failed *.

* Strumon, *stream of the hill,* the name of the seat of the family of Gaul, in the neighbourhood of Selma. During Gaul's expedition to Tromathon, mentioned in the *poem of Oithona,* Morni his father died. Morni ordered the *sword of Strumon* (which had been preserved, in the family, as a relique, from the days of Colgach, the most renowned of his ancestors) to be laid by his side, in the tomb: at the same time, leaving it in charge to his son, not to take it from thence, till he was reduced to the last extremity. Not long after, two of his brothers being slain, in battle, by Coldaronnan, chief of Cluthа, Gaul went to his father's tomb to take the sword. His address to the spirit of the deceased hero, is the subject of the following short poem.

Gaul.

" Breaker of echoing shields, whose head is deep in shades; hear me from the darkness of Clora, O son of Colgach, hear!

" No rustling, like the eagle's wing, comes over the course of my streams. Deep bosomed in the midst of the desert, O king of Strumon, hear!

" Dwellest thou in the shadowy breeze, that pours its dark wave over the grass? Cease to strew the beard of the thistle; O chief of Clora, hear!

" Or ridest thou on a beam, amidst the dark trouble of clouds?

On his spear leans Fillan of Selma *, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raises his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice fails him as he speaks. My brother could not boast of battles: at once he strides away. Bent over a distant stream he stands, the tear hangs in his eye. He strikes, at times, the thistle's head, with his inverted spear. Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he beholds his son. He beholds him, with bursting joy; and turns, amid his crowded soul. In silence turns the king toward Mora of woods. He hides the big tear with his locks. At length his voice is heard.

Pourest thou the loud wind on seas, to roll their blue waves over isles? Hear me, father of Gaul; amidst thy terrors, hear!

"The rustling of eagles is heard, the murmuring oaks shake their heads on the hills: dreadful and pleasant is thy approach, friend of the dwelling of heroes."

MORNI.

"Who awakes me, in the midst of my cloud, where my locks of mist spread on the winds? Mixed with the noise of streams, why rises the voice of Gaul?"

GAUL.

"My foes are around me, Morni: their dark ships descend from their waves. Give the sword of Strumon, that beam which thou hidest in thy night."

MORNI.

"Take the sword of resounding Strumon; I look on thy war, my son; I look, a dim meteor, from my cloud: blue-shielded Gaul, destroy."

* Clatho was the daughter of Cathulla, king of Inistore. Fingal, in one of his expeditions to that island, fell in love with Clatho, and took her to wife, after the death of Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, king of Ireland.

Clatho was the mother of Ryno, Fillan, and Bosmina, mentioned in the *battle of Lora*. Fillan is often called the son of Clatho, to distinguish him from those sons which Fingal had by Ros-crana, an Irish lady, of whom Ossian was one. *C.*

"First of the sons of Morni! Thou rock that defiest the storm! Lead thou my battle, for the race of low-laid Cormac. No boy's staff is thy spear: no harmless beam of light thy sword. Son of Morni of steeds, behold the foe! Destroy! Fillan, observe the chief! He is not calm in strife: nor burns he, heedless, in battle. My son, observe the chief! He is strong as Lubar's stream, but never foams and roars. High on cloudy Mora, Fingal shall behold the war. Stand, Ossian *, near thy father, by the falling stream. Raise the voice, O bards! Selma, move beneath the sound. It is my latter field. Clothe it over with light."

As the sudden rising of winds; or distant rolling of troubled seas, when some dark ghost, in wrath heaves the billows over an isle: an isle, the seat of mist, on the deep, for many dark-brown years! So terrible is the sound of the host, wide-moving over the field. Gaul is tall before them. The streams glitter within his strides. The bards raise the song by his side. He strikes his shield between. On the skirts of the blast, the tuneful voices rise.

"On Crona," said the bards, "there bursts a stream by night. It swells in its own dark course, till morning's early beam. Then comes it white from the hill, with the rocks and their hundred groves. Far be my steps from Crona. Death is rolling there. Be ye a stream from Mora, sons of cloudy Morven!"

"Who rises, from his car, on Clutha? The hills are troubled before the king! The dark woods echo

* Ullin being sent to Morven with the body of Oscar, Ossian attends his father, in quality of chief bard.

round, and lighten at his steel. See him, amidst the foe, like Colgach's * sportful ghost: when he scatters the clouds, and rides the eddying winds! It is Morni † of bounding steeds! Be like thy father, O Gaul!"

"Selma is opened wide. Bards take the trembling harps. Ten youths bear the oak of the feast. A distant sun-beam marks the hill. The dusky waves of the blast fly over the fields of grass. Why art thou silent, O Selma? The king returns with all his fame. Did not the battle roar; yet peaceful is his brow? It roared, and Fingal overcame. Be like thy father, O Fillan!"

They move beneath the song. High wave their arms, as rushy fields, beneath autumnal winds. On *Mora* stands the king in arms. Mist flies round his

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* There are some traditions, but, I believe of late invention, that this Colgach was the same with the Galgacus of Tacitus. He was the ancestor of Gaul, the son of Morni, and appears, from some, really ancient traditions, to have been king, or Vergobret of the Caledonians; and hence proceeded the pretensions of the family of Morni to the throne, which created a good deal of disturbance, both to Comhal and his son Fingal. The first was killed in battle by that tribe; and it was after Fingal was grown up, that they were reduced to obedience. Colgach signifies *fiercely-looking*; which is a very proper name for a warrior, and is probably the origin of Galgacus: though I believe it a matter of mere conjecture, that the Colgach here mentioned was the same with that hero. I cannot help observing, that the song of the bards is conducted with propriety. Gaul, whose experience might have rendered his conduct cautious in war, has the example of his father, just rushing to battle, set before his eyes. Fillan, on the other hand, whose youth might make him impetuous and unguarded in action, is put in mind of the sedate and serene behaviour of Fingal upon like occasions.

† The expedition of Morni to Clutha, alluded to here, is handed down in tradition

buckler abroad; as, aloft, it hung on a bough, on Cormul's mossy rock. In silence I stood by Fingal, and turned my eyes on *Cromla's* * wood; lest I should behold the host, and rush amid my swelling soul. My foot is forward on the heath. I glittered, tall, in steel: like the falling stream of Tromo, which nightly winds bind over with ice. The boy sees it, on high, gleaming to the early beam; towards it he turns his ear, and wonders why it is so silent!

Nor bent over a stream is Cathmor, like a youth in a peaceful field. Wide he drew forward the war, a dark and troubled wave. But when he beheld Fingal on *Mora*; his generous pride arose. "Shall the chief of Atha fight, and no king in the field? Foldath, lead my people forth. Thou art a beam of fire."

Forth issues Foldath of Moma, like a cloud, the robe of ghosts. He drew his sword, a flame, from his side. He bade the battle move. The tribes, like ridgy waves, dark pour their strength around. Haughty is his stride before them. His red eye rolls in wrath. He calls Cormul chief of Dunratho †; and his words were heard.

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* The mountain Cromla was in the neighbourhood of the scene of this poem; which was nearly the same with that of Fingal, and about six or seven miles distant from the nearest link of the chain of *Mora*, at whose eastern foot by the Lubar river the battle was fought. *C.*

† Dun-ratho, *a hill with a plain on its top.* Cormul, *blue eye.* Foldath dispatches here, Cormul to lie in ambush behind the army of the Caledonians. This speech suits with the character of Foldath, which is, throughout, haughty and presumptuous. Towards the latter end of this speech, we find the opinion of the times, concerning the unhappiness of the souls of those who were buried without the funeral song. This doctrine was inculcated by the bards, to make their order respectable and necessary.

"Cormul, thou beholdest that path. It winds green behind the foe. Place thy people there; lest Selma should escape from my sword. Bards of green-valleyed Erin, let no voice of yours arise. The sons of Morven must fall without song. They are the foes of Cairbar. Hereafter shall the traveller meet, their dark, thick mist on Lena, where it wanders, with their ghosts, beside the reedy lake. Never shall they rise, without song, to the dwelling of winds."

Cormul darkened, as he went Behind him rushed his tribe. They sunk beyond the rock. Gaul spoke to Fillan of Selma; as his eye pursued the course of the dark-eyed chief of Dunratho. "Thou beholdest the steps of Cormul! Let thine arm be strong! When he is low, son of Fingal, remember Gaul in war. Here I fall forward into battle, amid the ridge of shields."

The sign of death ascends: the dreadful sound of Morni's shield. Gaul pours his voice between. Fingal rises on Mora. He saw them, from wing to wing, bending at once in strife. Gleaming on his own dark hill, stood Cathmor of streamy Atha. The kings were like two spirits of heaven, standing each on his gloomy cloud; when they pour abroad the winds, and lift the roaring seas. The blue-tumbling of waves is before them, marked with the paths of whales. They themselves are calm and bright. The gale lifts slowly their locks of mist!

What beam of light hangs high in air! What beam, but Morni's dreadful sword! Death is strewed on thy paths, O Gaul! Thou foldest them together in thy rage. Like a young oak falls Tur-lathon, *

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* Tur-lathon; *broad-trunk of a tree*. Moruth, *great stream* Oichaoma, *mild maid*. Dun-lora, *the hill of the noisy stream*. Duth-caron, *dark brown man*.

with his branches round him. His high-bosomed spouse stretches her white arms, in dreams, to the returning chief, as she sleeps by gurgling Moruth, in her disordered locks. It is his ghost, Oichaoma. The chief is lowly laid. Hearken not to the winds for Tur-lathon's echoing shield. It is pierced, by his streams. Its sound is past away.

Not peaceful is the hand of Foldath. He winds his course in blood. Connal met him in fight. They mixed their clanging steel. Why should mine eyes behold them! Connal, thy locks are gray! Thou wert the friend of strangers, at the moss-covered rock of Dun-lora.* When the skies were rolled together; then thy feast was spread. The stranger heard the winds without; and rejoiced at thy burning oak. Why, son of Duth-caron, art thou laid in blood! The blasted tree bends above thee. Thy shield lies broken near. Thy blood mixes with the stream; thou breaker of the shields!

Ossian took the spear, in his wrath. But Gaul rushed forward on Foldath. The feeble pass by his side: his rage is turned on Moma's chief. Now they had raised their deathful spears; unseen an arrow came. It pierced the hand of Gaul. His steel fell sounding to earth. Young Fillan came†, with Cormul's shield! He stretched it large before the chief.

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* Dun-lora is a mountain in Antrim county, nearly opposite to Morven, *vide* the map. *C.*

† Fillan had been dispatched by Gaul to oppose Cormul, who had been sent by Foldath to lie in ambush behind the Caledonian army. It appears that Fillan had killed Cormul, otherwise, he could not be supposed to have possessed himself of the shield of that chief.

Foldath sent his shouts abroad, and kindled all the field: as a blast that lifts the wide-winged flame over Lumon's echoing groves.*

"Son of blue-eyed Clatho," said Gaul, "O Fillan! thou art a beam from heaven; that, coming on the troubled deep, binds up the tempest's wing. Cormul is fallen before thee. Early art thou in the fame of thy fathers. Rush not too far, my hero. I cannot lift the spear to aid. I stand harmless in battle: but my voice shall be poured abroad. The sons of Selma shall hear, and remember my former deeds."

His terrible voice rose on the wind. The host bends forward in fight. Often had they heard him, at Strumon, when he called them to the chase of the hinds. He stands tall, amid the war, as an oak in the skirts of a storm, which now is clothed on high, in mist: then shews its broad, waving head. The musing hunter lifts his eye, from his own rushy field!

My soul pursues thee, O Fillan! through the path of thy fame. Thou rolledst the foe before thee. Now Foldath, perhaps, may fly: but night comes down with its clouds. Cathmor's horn is heard on high. The sons of Selma hear the voice of Fingal, from Mora's gathered mist. The bards pour their song, like dew, on the returning war.

"Who comes from Strumon," they said, "amid her wandering locks? She is mournful in her steps, and lifts her blue eyes toward Erin. Why art thou sad,

* Lumon, *bending-hill*; a mountain in Inis-huna, or that part of South-Britain which is over against the Irish coast. *M.*—This Inis-huna I take to be the same known by that name in the county of Derry, noted for its famous whiskey. *C.*

Evir-chom * ? Who is like thy chief in renown ? He descended dreadful to battle ; he returns, like a light from a cloud. He raised the sword in wrath : they shrunk before blue-shielded Gaul !

" Joy, like the rustling gale, comes on the soul of the king. He remembers the battles of old ; the days wherein his fathers fought. The days of old return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices, from his cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, as it shakes its lonely head on the heath ; so joyful is the king over Fillan !

" As the rolling of thunder on hills, when Lara's fields are still and dark, such are the steps of Selma pleasant and dreadful to the ear. They return with their sound, like eagles to their dark-brown rock, after the prey is torn on the field, the dun sons of the bounding hind. Your fathers rejoice from their clouds, sons of streamy Selma !"

Such was the nightly voice of bards, on Mora of the hinds. A flame rose, from an hundred oaks, which winds had torn from Cormul's steep. The feast is spread in the midst : around sat the gleaming chiefs. Fingal is there in his strength. The eagle-wing † of his helmet sounds. The rustling blasts of the west, unequal rush through night. Long looks

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* Evir-choama, *mild and stately maid,* the wife of Gaul. She was the daughter of Casdu-conglas, chief of I-drondo, one of the Hebrides.

† The kings of Caledonia and Ireland had a plume of eagle's feathers, by way of ornament, in their helmets. It was from this distinguishing mark that Ossian knew Cathmor, in the second book.

the king in silence round: at length his words are heard.

"My soul feels a want in our joy. I behold a breach among my friends. The head of one tree is low. The squally wind pours in on Selma. Where is the chief of Dun-lora? Ought Connal to be forgot at the feast? When did he forget the stranger, in the midst of his echoing hall? Ye are silent in my presence! Connal is then no more. Joy meet thee, O warrior! like a stream of light. Swift be thy course to thy fathers, along the roaring winds! Ossian, thy soul is fire: kindle the memory of the king. Awake the battles of Connal, when first he shone in war. The locks of Connal were grey. His days of youth * were mixed with mine. In one day Duthcaron first strung our bows, against the roes of Dun-lora.

"Many," I said, "are our paths to battle, in green-vallied Erin. Often did our sails arise, over the blue tumbling waves; when we came, in other days, to aid the race of Conar. The strife roared once in

* After the death of Comhal, and during the usurpation of the tribe of Morni, Fingal was educated in private by Duthcaron. It was then he contracted that intimacy with Connal, the son of Duthcaron, which occasions him so much regretting his fall. When Fingal was grown up, he soon reduced the tribe of Morni; and, as it appears from the subsequent episode, sent Duthcaron and his son Connal to the aid of Cormac, the son of Conar, king of Ireland, who was driven to the last extremity, by the insurrections of the Firbolg. *M.*—Rather by the attempts of the true Prince of Atha to recover back his throne, which Connor had usurped. *C.*—This episode throws farther light on the contests between the Cael and Firbolg.

Alnecma, at the foam-covered streams of Duth-úla *. With Cormac descended to battle Duthcaron from cloudy Selma. Nor descended Duthcaron alone, his son was by his side, the long-haired youth of Connal lifting the first of his spears. Thou didst command them, O Fingal! to aid the king of Erin.

"Like the bursting strength of ocean, the sons of Bolga rushed to war. Colculla † was before them, the chief of blue-streaming Atha. The battle was mixed on the plain. Cormac ‡ shone in his own

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* Duth-úla, a river in Connaught; it signifies *dark-rushing water*. *M.*—Such a river may be in Connaught. *C.*

† Colc-ulla, *firm look in readiness*; he was the brother of Borbar-duthul, the father of Cairbar and Cathmor, who after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho, successively mounted the Irish throne.

‡ Cormac, the son of Conar, the second king of Ireland, of the race of the Caledonians. This insurrection of the Firbolg happened towards the latter end of the long reign of Cormac. He never possessed the Irish throne peaceably. The party of the family of Atha had made several attempts to overturn the succession in the race of Conar, before they effected it, in the minority of Cormac, the son of Artho. Ireland, from the most ancient accounts concerning it, seems to have been always so disturbed by domestic commotions, that it is difficult to say, whether it ever was, for any length of time, subject to one monarch. It is certain, that every province, if not every small district, had its own king. One of these petty princes assumed, at times, the title of king of Ireland, and, on account of his superior force, or in cases of public danger, was acknowledged by the rest as such; but the succession from father to son, does not appear to have been established. It was the divisions amongst themselves, arising from the bad constitution of their government, that, at last, subjected the Irish to a foreign yoke. *M.* True—but the family of O'Neal can trace their family renown farther into antiquity than any family in the British empire!

strife, bright as the forms of his fathers. But, far before the rest, Duthcaron hewed down the foe. Nor slept the arm of Connal by his father's side. Colculla prevailed on the plain: like scattered mist, fled the people of Cormac *.

"Then rose the sword of Duthcaron, and the steel of broad-shielded Connal. They shaded their flying friends, like two rocks with their heads of pine. Night came down on Duth-ula: silent strode the chiefs over the field. A mountain-stream roared across the path, nor could Duthcaron bound over its course." "Why stands my father?" said Connal. "I hear the rushing foe."

"Fly, Connal," he said. "Thy father's strength begins to fail. I come wounded from battle. Here let me rest in night." "But thou shalt not remain alone," said Connal's bursting sigh. "My shield is an eagle's wing to cover the king of Dun-lora." He bends dark above his father. The mighty Duthcaron dies.

Day rose, and night returned. No lonely bard appeared, deep musing on the heath: and could Connal leave the tomb of his father, till he should receive his fame? He bent the bow against the rose of Duth-ula. He spread the lonely feast. Seven nights he laid his

And from many concurrent proofs it is clear to my mind, that Colculla, the chief of Atha was ancestor of the O'Neills. *C.*

* The inhabitants of Ullin or Ulster, who were of the race of the Caledonians, seem, alone, to have been the firm friends to the succession in the family of Conar. The Firbolg were only subject to them by constraint, and embraced every opportunity to throw off their yoke. *M.*—He alludes to the Milesians. *C.*

head on the tomb, and saw his father in his dreams. He saw him rolled, dark, in a blast, like the vapour of reedy Lego. At length the steps of * Colgan

* Colgan the son of Cathmul, was the principal bard of Cormac, king of Ireland. The following dialogue, on the loves of Fingal and Ros-crána, may be ascribed to him:

ROS-CRANA.

By night, came a dream to Ros-crána! I feel my beating soul. No vision of the forms of the dead came to the blue eyes of Erin. But, rising from the wave of the north, I beheld him bright in his locks. I beheld the son of the king. My beating soul is high. I laid my head down in night: again ascended the form. Why delayest thou thy coming, young rider of stormy waves!

But, there, far-distant, he comes; where seas roll their green ridges in mist! Young dweller of my soul; why dost thou delay—

FINGAL.

It was the soft voice of Moi-lena! the pleasant breeze of the valley of roes! But why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes rise. Are not thy steps covered with light? In thy groves thou appearest, Ros-crána, like the sun in the gathering of clouds. Why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes rise.

ROS-CRANA.

My fluttering soul is high! Let me turn from the steps of the king. He has heard my secret voice, and shall my blue eyes roll in his presence? Roe of the hill of moss, toward thy dwelling I move. Meet me, ye breezes of Mora! as I move through the valley of winds. But why should he ascend his ocean? Son of heroes, my soul is thine! My steps shall not move to the desert; the light of Ros-crána is here.

FINGAL.

It was the light tread of a ghost, the fair dweller of eddying winds. Why deceivest thou me with thy voice? Here let me rest in shades. Shouldst thou stretch thy white arm from thy grove, thou sun-beam of Cormac of Erin!

came, the bard of high Temora. Duthcaron received his fame, and brightened, as he rose on the wind.

"Pleasant to the ear," said Fingal, "is the praise of the kings of men; when their bows are strong in battle; when they soften at the sight of the sad. Thus let my name be renowned, when bards shall lighten my rising soul. Carril, son of Kinfena! take the bards and raise a tomb. To-night let Connal dwell within his narrow house. Let not the soul of the valiant wander on the winds. Faint glimmers the moon on *Moi-lena*, through the broad-headed groves of the hill! *Raise stones*, beneath its beam, to all the fallen in war. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were strong in fight. They were my rock in danger; the mountain from which I spread my eagle-wings. Thence am I renowned. Carril, forget not the low!"

Loud, at once, from the hundred bards, rose the song of the tomb. Carril strode before them, they are the murmur of streams behind his steps. Silence dwells in the vales of *Moi-lena*,* where *each, with its own dark rill*, is *winding between the hills*. I heard the voice of the bards, lessening, as they moved along. I leaned forward from my shield; and felt the kindling of my soul. Half-formed, the words of my song burst forth upon the wind. So hears a tree, on the

ROS-CRANA.

He is gone; and my blue eyes are dim; faint-rolling, in all my tears. But, there, I behold him, alone; king of Selma; my soul is thine. Ah me! what clanging of armour! Colc-ulla of Atha is near!

* This description of *Moi-lena* is as natural as beautiful. On this heath such stones are still standing, and such rivers still wind between their hills.—*Vide* the map. C.

vale, the voice of spring around. It pours its green leaves to the sun. It shakes its lonely head. The hum of the mountain bee is near it; the hunter sees it, with joy, from the blasted heath.

Young Fillan at a distance stood. His helmet lay glittering on the ground. His dark hair is loose to the blast. A beam of light is Clatho's son! He heard the words of the king, with joy. He leaned forward on his spear.

"My son," said car-borne Fingal; "I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. The fame of our fathers, I said, bursts from its gathering cloud.* Thou art brave, son of Clatho! but headlong in the strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind. They are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of the old. The memory of the past returns, my deeds in other years: when first I descended from ocean on the green-valleyed isle."

We bend towards the voice of the king. The moon looks abroad from her cloud. The grey-skirted mist is near: the dwelling of the ghosts!

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK IV.

The second night continues. Fingal relates, at the feast, his own first expedition into Ireland, and his marriage with Ros-crána, the daughter of Cormac, king of that island. The Irish chiefs convene in the presence of Cathmor. The situation of the king described. The story of Sul-malla, the daughter of Conmor, king of Inis-huna, who, in the disguise of a young warrior, had followed Cathmor to the war. The sullen behaviour of Foldath, who had commanded in the battle of the preceding day, renews the difference between him and Malthos; but Cathmor, interposing, ends it. The chiefs feast, and hear the song of Fonar the bard. Cathmor returns to rest, at a distance from the army. The ghost of his brother Cairbar appears to him in a dream; and obscurely foretels the issue of the war. The soliloquy of the king. He discovers Sul-malla. Morning comes. Her soliloquy closes the book.

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK IV.

"BENEATH * an oak," said the king, "I sat on Selma's streamy rock, when Connal rose, from the sea, with the broken spear of Duth-caron. Far distant stood the youth. He turned away his eyes. He remembered the steps of his father, on his own green hills. I darkened in my place. Dusky thoughts flew over my soul. The kings of Erin rose before me. I half-unsheathed the sword. Slowly approached the chiefs. They lifted up their silent eyes. Like a ridge of clouds, they wait for the bursting forth of my voice. My voice was, to them, a wind from heaven to roll the mist away.

"I bade my white sails to rise, before the roar of

* This episode has an immediate connection with the story of Connal and Duth-caron, in the latter end of the third book. Fingal, sitting beneath an oak, near the palace of Selma, discovers Connal just landing from Ireland, The danger which threatened Cormac, king of Ireland, induces him to sail immediately to that island. The story is introduced, by the king, as a pattern for the future behaviour of Fillan, whose rashness in the preceding battle is reprimanded.

Cona's wind. Three hundred youths looked, from their waves, on Fingal's bossy shield. High on the mast it hung, and marked the dark-blue sea. But when night came down, I struck, at times, the warning boss; I struck, and looked on high, for fiery-haired Ul-erin *. Nor absent was the star of heaven. It travelled red between the clouds. I pursued the lovely beam, on the faint-gleaming deep. With morning, Erin rose in mist. We came in the bay of Moi-lena †, where its blue waters tumbled, in the bosom of echoing woods. Here Cormac, in his secret hall, avoids the strength of Colc-ulla. Nor he alone avoids the foe. The blue eye of Ros-crána is there: Ros-crána ‡, white-handed maid, the daughter of the king!

"Grey, on his pointless spear, came forth the aged steps of Cormac. He smiled, from his waving locks; but grief was in his soul. He saw us few before him, and his sigh arose. "I see the arms of Trenmor," he said; "and these are the steps of the king! Fingal! thou art a beam of light to Cormac's darkened soul.

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* Ul-erin, *the guide to Ireland*, a star known by that name in the days of Fingal, and very useful to those who sailed, by night, from the Hebrides, or Caledonia, to the coast of Ulster.

† This is the first time I have noticed the "*Bay of Moi-lena*." But it evidently alludes to the shore of Belfast loch, whose western side for several miles is bounded by Moi-lena. *C.*

‡ Ros-crána, *the beam of the rising sun;* she was the mother of Ossian. The Irish bards relate strange fictions concerning this princess. Their stories, however, concerning Fingal, if they mean him by *Fion Mac-Comnal*, are so inconsistent and notoriosuly fabulous, that they do not deserve to be mentioned; for they evidently bear, along with them, the marks of late invention. *M.*—And yet the Scots acknowledge such authority sufficient grounds on which to build the early part of their history. *C.*

Early is thy fame, my son: but strong are the foes of Erin. They are like the roar of streams in the land, son of car-borne Comhal!" "Yet they may be rolled * away," I said in my rising soul. "We are not of the race of the feeble, king of blue-shielded hosts! Why should fear come amongst us, like a ghost of night? The soul of the valiant grows, when foes increase in the field. Roll no darkness, king of Erin, on the young in war!"

"The bursting tears of the king came down. He seized my hand in silence. "Race of the daring Trenmor!" at length he said, "I roll no cloud before thee. Thou burnest in the fire of thy fathers. I behold thy fame. It marks thy course in battle, like a stream of light. But wait the coming of Cairbar †; my son must join thy sword. He calls the sons of Erin from all their distant streams."

"We came to the hall of the king, where it rose in the midst of rocks, on whose dark sides were the marks of streams of old. Broad oaks bend around with their moss. The thick birch is waving near.

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* Cormac had said that the foes were *like the roar of streams*, and Fingal continues the metaphor. The speech of the young hero is spirited, and consistent with that sedate intrepidity, which already distinguishes his character throughout.

† Cairbar, the son of Cormac, was afterwards king of Ireland. His reign was short. He was succeeded by his son Artho, the father of that Cormac who was murdered by Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul. Cairbar, the son of Cormac, long after his son Artho was grown to man's estate, had, by his wife Beltanno, another son, whose name was Ferad-artho. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar the first king of Ireland, when Fingal's expedition against Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul happened. See more of Ferad artho in the eighth book.

Half hid, in her shady grove, Ros-crána raises the song. Her white hands move on the harp. I beheld her blue-rolling eyes. She was like a spirit * of heaven half-folded in the skirt of a cloud!"

"'Three days we feast at Moi-lena. She rises bright in my troubled soul. Cormac beheld me dark. He gave the white-bosomed maid. She comes with bending eye, amid the wandering of her heavy locks. She came! Straight the battle roared. Colc-ulla ap-

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* The attitude of Ros-crána is illustrated by this simile; for the ideas of those times, concerning the spirits of the deceased, were not so gloomy and disagreeable, as those of succeeding ages. The spirits of women, it was supposed, retained that beauty, which they possessed while living, and transported themselves, from place to place, with that gliding motion, which Homer ascribes to the gods. The descriptions which poets, less ancient than Ossian, have left us of those beautiful figures, that appeared sometimes on the hills, are elegant and picturesque. They compare them to the *rain-bow on streams;* or *the gilding of sun-beams on the hills.*

A chief who lived three centuries ago, returning from the war, understood that his wife or mistress was dead. A bard introduces him speaking the following soliloquy, when he came within sight of the place where he had left her at his departure.

"My soul darkens in sorrow. I behold not the smoke of my hall. No grey dog bounds at my streams. Silence dwells in the valley of trees.

"Is that a rain-bow on Crunah? It flies: and the sky is dark. Again, thou movest, bright, on the heath, thou sun-beam clothed in a shower! Hah! it is she, my love! her gliding course on the bosom of winds!"

In succeeding times the beauty of Ros-crána passed into a proverb; and the highest compliment that could be paid to a woman, was to compare her person with *the daughter of Cormac.*

'S tu fein an Ros-crána.

Siol Chormec ana n'toma lan,

peared: I took my spear. My sword rose, with my people, against the ridgy foe. Alnecma fled. Colculla fell. Fingal returned with fame."

"Renowned is he, O Fillan, who fights, in the strength of his host. The bard pursues his steps, through the land of the foe. But he who fights alone; few are his deeds to other times! He shines, to-day, a mighty light. To-morrow, he is low. One song contains his fame. His name is on ONE dark field. He is forgot; but where his tomb sends forth the tufted grass."

Such are the words of Fingal, on Mora of the roes. Three bards, from the rock of Cormul, pour down the pleasing song. Sleep descends, in the sound, on the broad-skirted host. Carril returned, with the bards, from the tomb of Dun-lora's chief. The voice of morning shall not come to the dusky bed of Duthcaron. No more shalt thou hear the tread of roes around thy narrow house!

As roll the troubled clouds, round a meteor of night, when they brighten their sides, with its light, along the heaving sea: so gathers Erin, around the gleaming form of Cathmor. HE, tall in the midst, careless lifts, at times, his spear: as swells or falls the sound of Fonar's distant harp. Near * him leaned,

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* In order to illustrate this passage, I shall give, here, the history on which it is founded, as I have gathered it from tradition. The nation of the Firbolg who inhabited the south of Ireland, being originally descended from the Belgæ, who possessed the south and south-west coast of Britain, kept up, for many ages, an amicable correspondence with their mother-country; and sent aid to the British Belgæ, when they were pressed by the Romans or other new-comers from the Continent. Con-mor,

against a rock, Sulmalla * of blue eyes, the white-bosomed daughter of Conmor, king of Inis-huna.† To his aid came blue-shielded Cathmor, and rolled his foes away. Sulmalla beheld him stately in the hall of feasts. Nor careless rolled the eyes of Cathmor on the long-haired maid!

The third day arose when Fithil ‡ came, from Erin

king of Inis-huna, (that part of South Britain which is over against the Irish coast,) being attacked, by what enemy is not mentioned, sent for aid to Cairbar, lord of Atha, the most potent chief of the Firbolg. Cairbar dispatched his brother, Cathmor to the assistance of Con-mor. Cathmor, after various vicissitudes of fortune, put an end to the war, by the total defeat of the enemies of Inis-huna, and returned in triumph to the residence of Con-mor. There at a feast, Sulmalla, the daughter of Con-mor, fell desperately in love with Cathmor, who, before her passion was disclosed, was recalled to Ireland by his brother Cairbar, upon the news of the intended expedition of Fingal, to re-establish the family of Conar on the Irish throne. The wind being contrary, Cathmor remained, for three days, in a neighbouring bay, during which time Sulmalla disguised herself in the habit of a young warrior, and came to offer him her service in the war. Cathmor accepted of the proposal, sailed for Ireland, and arrived in Ulster a few days before the death of Cairbar.

* Sul-malla, *slowly-rolling eyes.* Caon-mór, *mild and tall.* Inis-huna, *green island.*

† I cannot agree with the conjecture of the translator relative to the situation of *Inis-huna, vide* my reasons in the data of the map. *C.*

‡ Fithil, *an inferior bard.* It may either be taken here for the proper name of a man, or in the literal sense, as the bards were the heralds and messengers of these times. Cathmor, it is probable, was absent, when the rebellion of his brother Cairbar, and the assassination of Cormac, king of Ireland, happened. Cathmor and his followers had only arrived from Inis-huna, three days before the death of Cairbar, which sufficiently clears his

of the streams. He told of the lifting up of the shield * in Selma: he told of the danger of Cairbar. Cathmor raised the sail at Cluba; but the winds were in other lands. Three days he remained on the coast, and turned his eyes on Conmor's halls. He remembered the daughter of strangers, and his sigh arose. Now when the winds awaked the wave: from the hill came a youth in arms; to lift the sword with Cathmor, in his echoing fields. It was the white-armed Sulmalla. Secret she dwelt beneath her helmet. Her steps were in the path of the king: on him her blue eyes rolled with joy, when he lay by his roaring streams! But Cathmor thought, that, on Lumon, she still pursued the roes. He thought, that fair on a rock, she stretched her white hand to the wind; to feel its course from Erin, the green dwelling of her love. He had promised to return, with his white-

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character from any imputation of being concerned in the conspiracy with his brother.

* The ceremony which was used by Fingal, when he prepared for an expedition, is related thus in tradition: A bard, at midnight, went to the hall where the tribes feasted upon solemn occasions, raised the *war song*, and thrice called the spirits of their deceased ancestors to come, *on their clouds*, to behold the actions of their children. He then fixed the *shield of Trenmor*, on a tree on the rock of Selma, striking it, at times, with the blunt end of a spear, and singing the war song between. Thus he did, for three successive nights, and, in the mean time, messengers were dispatched to call together the tribes; or, to use an ancient expression, *to call them from all their streams*. This phrase alludes to the situation of the residences of the clans, which were generally fixed in valleys, where the torrents of the neighbouring mountains were collected into one body, and became *large streams* or rivers. *The lifting up of the shield*, was the phrase for beginning a war.

bosomed sails. The maid is near thee, O Cathmor! leaning on her rock.

The tall forms of the chiefs stand around; all but dark-browed Foldath.* He leaned against a distant tree, rolled into his haughty soul. His bushy hair whistles in wind. At times, bursts the hum of a song. He struck the tree, at length, in wrath; and rushed before the king! Calm and stately, to the beam of the oak, arose the form of young Hidalla. His hair falls round his blushing cheek, in wreaths of waving light. Soft was his voice in Clon-ra,† in the valley of his fathers. Soft was his voice when he touched the harp, in the hall, near his roaring streams!

"King of Erin," said Hidalla, "now is the time to feast. Bid the voice of bards arise. Bid them roll the night away. The soul returns, from song, more terrible to war. Darkness settles on Erin. From hill to hill bend the skirted clouds. Far and grey, on the heath, the dreadful strides of ghosts are seen: the ghosts of those who fell bend forward to their song. Bid, O Cathmor! the harps to rise, to brighten the dead, on their wandering blasts."

"Be all the dead forgot," said Foldath's bursting wrath. "Did not I fail in the field? Shall I then

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* The surly attitude of Foldath is a proper preamble to his after behaviour. Chaffed with the disappointment of the victory which he promised himself, he becomes passionate and overbearing. The quarrel which succeeds between him and Malthos, is introduced to raise the character of Cathmor, whose superior worth shines forth, in his manly manner of ending the difference between the chiefs.

† Claon-rath, *winding field*. The *th* are seldom pronounced audibly in the Gallic language.

hear the song? Yet was not my course harmless in war. Blood was a stream around my steps. But the feeble were behind me. The foe has escaped from my sword. In Clon-ra's vale touch thou the harp. Let Dura answer to the voice of Hidalla. Let some maid look, from the wood, on thy long, yellow locks. Fly from Lubar's echoing plain. This is the field of heroes!" *

"King of Erin †," Malthos said, "it is THINE to lead in war. THOU art a fire to our eyes, on the dark-brown field. Like a blast THOU has past over hosts. THOU hast laid them low in blood. But who has heard thy words returning from the field? The wrathful delight in death: their remembrance rests on the wounds of their spear. Strife is folded in THEIR thoughts: THEIR words are ever heard. Thy course, chief of Moma, was like a troubled stream. The dead were rolled on thy path: but others also lift the spear. WE were not feeble behind thee; but the foe was strong."

Cathmor beheld the rising rage, and bending forward of either chief: for, half-unsheathed, they held their swords, and rolled their silent eyes. Now would they have mixed in horrid fray, had not the wrath of Cathmor burned. He drew his sword: it gleamed through night, to the high-flaming oak! "Sons of pride," said the king, "allay your swelling souls. Retire in night. Why should my rage arise? Should

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* The echoing plain of Lubar, in other words the heath of Lena, for they are the same, deserved the poetical appellation from the numerous battles fought upon it. C.

† This speech of Malthos is, throughout, a severe reprimand to the blustering behaviour of Foldath.

I contend with both in arms? It is no time for strife! Retire, ye clouds, at my feast. Awake my soul no more."

They sunk from the king on either side; like * two columns of morning mist, when the sun rises, between them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side; each toward its reedy pool!

Silent sat the chiefs at the feast. They look, at times, on Atha's king, where he strode, on his rock, amid his settling soul. The host lie, along the field. Sleep descends on Moi-lena. The voice of Fonar ascends alone, beneath his distant tree. It ascends in the praise of Cathmor, son of Larthon † of Lumon.

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* This comparison is favourable to the superiority of Cathmor over his two chiefs. I shall illustrate this passage with another from a fragment of an ancient poem, just now in my hands. "As the sun is above the vapours, which his beams have raised; so is the soul of the king above the sons of fear. They roll dark below him; he rejoices in the robe of his beams. But when feeble deeds wander on the soul of the king, he is a darkened sun rolled along the sky: the valley is sad below: flowers wither beneath the drops of the night."

† Lear-thon, *sea wave*, the name of the chief of that colony of the Firbolg, which *first migrated into Ireland.* Larthon's first settlement in that country is related in the seventh book. He was the ancestor of Cathmor; and is here called *Larthon of Lumon,* from a high hill of that name in Inis-huna, the ancient seat of the Fir-bolg. *M.*—I have too much respect for the memory of Macpherson to blot out any thing which he has written, but knowing as I do, that he lost no opportunity that spleen afforded him, to depreciate every thing relating to Ireland, I have only to observe that I cannot subscribe to this doctrine. *C.*—The character of Cathmor is preserved. He had mentioned, in the first book, the aversion of that chief to praise, and we find him here lying at the side of a stream, that the noise of it might drown the voice of Fonar, who, according to the custom of the times, sung his eulogium in

But Cathmor did not hear his praise. He lay at the roar of a stream. The rustling breeze of night flew over his whistling locks.

His brother came to his dreams, half-seen from his low-hung cloud. Joy rose darkly in his face. He had heard the song of Carril *. A blast sustained his dark-skirted cloud; which he seized in the bosom of night, as he rose, with his fame, towards his airy hall. Half-mixed with the noise of the stream, he poured his feeble words.

"Joy met the soul of Cathmor. His voice was heard on Moi-lena †. The bard gave his song to Cairbar. He travels on the wind. My form is in my father's hall, like the gliding of a terrible light, which darts across the desert, in a stormy night. No bard shall be wanting at thy tomb, when thou art lowly

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his *evening-song*. Though other chiefs, as well as Cathmor, might be averse to hear their own praise, we find it the universal policy of the times, to allow the bards to be as extravagant as they pleased in their encomiums on the leaders of armies, in the presence of their people. The vulgar, who had no great ability to judge for themselves, received the characters of their princes entirely upon the faith of their bards.

* Carril, the son of Kinfena, by the orders of Ossian, sung the funeral elegy at the tomb of Cairbar. See the second book, towards the end. In all these poems, the visits of ghosts, to their living friends, are short, and their language obscure, both which circumstances tend to throw a solemn gloom on these supernatural scenes. Towards the latter end of the speech of the ghost of Cairbar, he foretels the death of Cathmor, by enumerating those signals, which, according to the opinion of the times, preceded the death of a person renowned. It was thought that the ghosts of deceased bards sung, for three nights preceding the death (near the place where his tomb was to be raised) round an unsubstantial figure which represented the body of the person who was to die.

† Vide the map. *C.*

laid. The sons of song love the valiant. Cathmor, thy name is a pleasant gale. The mournful sounds arise! On Lubar's field there is a voice! Louder still, ye shadowy ghosts! The dead were full of fame! Shrilly swells the feeble sound. The rougher blast alone is heard! Ah! soon is Cathmor low!" Rolled into himself he flew, wide on the bosom of winds. The old oak felt his departure, and shook its whistling head. Cathmor starts from rest. He takes his deathful spear. He lifts his eyes around. He sees but dark-skirted night.

"It * was the voice of the king," he said. "But now his form is gone. Unmarked is your path in the air, ye children of the night. Often, like a reflected beam, are ye seen in the desert wild: but ye retire in your blasts, before our steps approach. Go then, ye feeble race! Knowledge with you there is none! Your joys are weak, and like the dreams of our rest, or the light-winged thought, that flies across the soul. Shall Cathmor soon be low? Darkly laid in his narrow house? Where no morning comes, with her half-opened eyes? Away, thou shade! to fight is mine! All further thought, away! I rush forth, on eagle's wings, to seize my beam of fame. In the lonely vale of streams, abides the narrow † soul. Years roll on,

* The soliloquy of Cathmor suits the magnanimity of his character. Though staggered at first with the prediction of Cairbar's ghost, he soon comforts himself with the agreeable prospect of his future renown; and, like Achilles, prefers a short and glorious life, to an obscure length of years in retirement and ease.

† An indolent and unwarlike life was held in extreme contempt. Whatever a philosopher may say, in praise of quiet and retirement, I am far from thinking, but they weaken and debase the

seasons return, but he is still unknown. In a blast comes cloudy death, and lays his grey head low. His ghost is folded in the vapour of the fenny field. Its course is never on hills, nor mossy vales of wind. So shall not Cathmor depart. No boy in the field was he, who only marks the bed of roes, upon the echoing hills. My issuing forth was with kings. My joy in dreadful plains: where broken hosts are rolled away, like seas before the wind."

So spoke the king of Alnecma, brightening in his rising soul. Valour, like a pleasant flame, is gleaming within his breast. Stately is his stride on the heath! The beam of east is poured around. He saw his grey host on the field, wide-spreading their ridges in light. He rejoiced, like a spirit of heaven,

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human mind. When the faculties of the soul are not exerted, they lose their vigour, and low and circumscribed notions take the place of noble and enlarged ideas. Action, on the contrary, and the vicissitudes of fortune which attend it, call forth, by turns, all the powers of the mind, and, by exercising, strengthen them. Hence it is, that in great and opulent states, when property and indolence are secured to individuals, we seldom meet with that strength of mind, which is so common in a nation, not far advanced in civilization. It is a curious, but just, observation, that great kingdoms seldom produce great characters, which must be altogether attributed to that indolence and dissipation, which are the inseparable companions of too much property and security. Rome, it is certain, had more real great men within it, when its power was confined within the narrow bounds of Latium, than when its dominion extended over all the known world; and one petty state of the Saxon heptarchy had, perhaps, as much genuine spirit in it, as the two British kingdoms united. As a state, we are much more powerful than our ancestors, but we should lose by comparing individuals with them.

whose steps come forth on the seas, when he beholds them peaceful round, and all the winds are laid. But soon he awakes the waves, and rolls them large to some echoing shore.

On the rushy bank of a stream, slept the daughter of Inis-huna. The helmet had fallen from her head. Her dreams were in the lands of her fathers. THERE morning is on the field. Grey streams leap down from the rocks. The breezes, in shadowy waves, fly over the rusky fields. THERE is the sound that prepares for the chase. THERE the moving of warriors from the hall. But tall above the rest is seen the hero of *streamy Atha.** He bends his eye of love on Sulmalla, from his stately steps. SHE turns, with pride, her face away, and careless bends the bow.

Such were the dreams of the maid, when Cathmor of Atha came. He saw her fair face before him, in the midst of her wandering locks. He knew the maid of Lumon. What should Cathmor do? His sighs arise. His tears come down. But straight he turns away. "This is no time, king of Atha, to awake thy secret soul. The battle is rolled before thee, like a troubled stream."

He struck that warning boss †, wherein dwelt the

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* Cathmor—O'Neill—is alluded to, the lord of all the lands lying near Lochneagh, or Lough Aidha, which receives a thousand streams. *C.*

† In order to understand this passage, it is necessary to look to the description of Cathmor's shield in the seventh book. This shield had seven principal bosses, the sound of each of which, when struck with a spear, conveyed a particular order from the king to his tribes. The sound of one of them, as here, was the signal for the army to assemble.

voice of war. Erin rose around him, like the sound of eagle-wing. Sul-malla started from sleep, in her disordered locks. She seized the helmet from earth. She trembled in her place. "Why should they know in Erin of the daughter of Inis-huna?" She remembered the race of kings. The pride of her soul arose! Her steps are behind a rock, by the blue-winding * stream of a vale: where dwelt the dark brown hind ere yet the war arose. Thither came the voice of Cathmor, at times, to Sul-malla's ear. Her soul is darkly sad. She pours her words on wind.

"The dreams of Inis-huna departed. They are dispersed from my soul. I hear not the chase in my land. I am concealed in the skirt of war. I look forth from my cloud. No beam appears to light my path. I behold my warrior low; for the broad-shielded king is near, he that overcomes in danger, Fingal from Selma of spears! Spirit of departed Conmor! are thy steps on the bosom of winds? Comest thou, at times, to other lands, father of sad Sul-malla? Thou dost come! I have heard thy voice at night; while yet I rose on the wave to Erin of the streams. The ghost of fathers, they say,† call away the souls of their

* This was not the valley of Lona to which Sul-malla afterwards retired.

† Con-mor, the father of Sul-malla, was killed in that war, from which Cathmor delivered Inis-huna. Lormar his son succeeded Conmor. It was the opinion of the times, when a person was reduced to a pitch of misery, which could admit of no alleviation, that the ghosts of his ancestors *called his soul away*. This supernatural kind of death was called the *voice of the dead*; and is believed by the superstitious vulgar to this day.

There is no people in the world, perhaps, who give more uni-

race, while they behold them lonely in the midst of woe. . Call me, my father, away! When Cathmor is low on earth; then shall Sul-malla be lonely in the midst of woe!"

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versal credit to apparitions, and the visits of the ghosts of the deceased to their friends, than the ancient Scots. This is to be attributed as much, at least, to the situation of the country they possess, as to that credulous disposition which distinguishes an unenlightened people. As their business was feeding of cattle, in dark and extensive deserts, so their journeys lay over wide and unfrequented heaths, where, often, they were obliged to sleep in the open air, amidst the whistling of winds, and roar of waterfalls. The gloominess of the scenes around them was apt to beget that melancholy disposition of mind, which most readily receives impressions of the extraordinary and supernatural kind. Falling asleep in this gloomy mood, and their dreams being disturbed by the noise of the elements around, it is no matter of wonder, that they thought they heard the *voice of the dead.* This *voice of the dead,* however, was, perhaps, no more than a shriller whistle of the winds in an old tree, or in the chinks of a neighbouring rock. It is to this cause I ascribe those many and improbable tales of ghosts, which we meet with in the Highlands; for, in other respects, we do not find that the inhabitants are more credulous than their neighbours.

TEMORA

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK V.

The poet, after a short address to the harp of Cona, describes the arrangement of both armies on either side of the river Lubar.* Fingal gives the command to Fillan; but, at the same time, orders Gaul, the son of Morni, who had been wounded in the hand in the preceding battle, to assist him with his counsel. The army of the Fir-bolg is commanded by Foldath. The general onset is described. The great actions of Fillan. He kills Rothmar and Culmin. But when Fillan conquers in one wing, Foldath presses hard on the other. He wounds Dermid, the son of Duthno, and puts the whole wing to flight. Dermid deliberates with himself, and, at last, resolves to put a stop to the progress of Foldath, by engaging him in single combat. When the two chiefs were approaching towards one another, Fillan came suddenly to the relief of Dermid; engaged Foldath, and killed him. The behaviour of Malthos towards the fallen Foldath. Fillan puts the whole army of the Fir-bolg to flight. The book closes with an address to Clatho, the mother of that hero.

* The frequent contests on *Lena*, by the *Lubar* river, may be accounted for, when we recollect that the *Lubar* was one of the principal barriers or out-posts of the defenders of the capital—Temora—Connor, where was the young King Cormac. C.

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK V.

THOU dweller between the shields, that hang, on high, in Ossian's hall! Descend from thy place, O harp, and let me hear thy voice! Son of Alpin, strike the string. Thou must awake the soul of the bard. The murmur of Lora's * stream has rolled the tale away. I stand in the cloud of years. Few are its openings toward the past; and when the vision comes, it is but dim and dark. I hear thee, harp of Selma! my soul returns, like a breeze, which the sun brings back to the vale, where dwelt the lazy mist!

Lubar † is bright before me in the windings of its

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* Lora is often mentioned; it was a small and rapid stream in the neighbourhood of Selma. There is no vestige of this name now remaining; though it appears from a very old song, which the translator has seen, that one of the small rivers on the north-west coast was called Lora *some centuries* ago. *M*—There is a similar stream which runs from a mountain still called *Dun-lora* opposite to Morven in the county of Antrim.—The frequent confounding of geographical positions in the poems renders it not improbable that this is the stream alluded to. *C.*

† From several passages in the poem we may form a distinct idea of the scene of the action of Temora. At a small distance

vale. On either side, on their hills, rise the tall forms of the kings. Their people are poured around them, bending forward to their words: as if their fathers spoke, descending from the winds. But they themselves are like two rocks in the midst; each with its dark head of pines, when they are seen in the desert, above low-sailing mist. High on their face are streams, which spread their foam on blasts of wind!

Beneath the voice of Cathmor pours Erin, like the sound of flame. Wide they come down to Lubar Before them is the stride of Foldath. But Cathmor retires to his hill, beneath his bending oak. The tumbling of a stream is near the king. He lifts, at times, his gleaming spear. It is a flame to his people, in the midst of war. Near him stands the daughter of Conmor, leaning on a rock. She did not rejoice at the

from one another rose the hills of Mora and Lora; *M.*—now Lysle. *C.*—he first possessed by Fingal, the second by the army of Cathmor. Through the intermediate plain ran the small river Lubar, on the banks of which all the battles were fought, excepting that between Cairbar and Oscar, related in the first book. This last mentioned engagement happened to the north of the hill of Mora, of which Fingal took possession, after the army of Cairbar fell back to that of Cathmor. At some distance, but within sight of Mora, towards the west, *Lubar* issued from the mountain of Crommal. *M.*—It issues from Crommal—now *Tardree,* and falls into the six mill water—an outlet of Lochneagh near Doagh; giving its name to the whole course of the river which falls into Loughneagh.—Lavath is probably Kells-water, on whose banks is a large cave opposite to Connor-Temora. *C.*—Behind the mountain of Crommal ran the small stream of Lavath, on the banks of which Ferad-artho, the son of Cairbar, the only person remaining of the race of Conar, lived concealed in a cave, during the usurpation of Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul. *M.*

strife. Her soul delighted not in blood. A * valley spreads green behind the hill, with its three blue streams. The sun is there in silence. The dun mountain-roes come down. On these are turned the eyes of Sul-malla in her thoughtful mood.

Fingal beholds Cathmor, on high, the son of Borbar-duthul! he beholds the deep-rolling of Erin, on the darkened plain. He strikes that warning boss, which bids the people to obey; when he sends his chiefs before them, to the field of renown. Wide rise their spears to the sun. Their echoing shields reply around. Fear, like a vapour, winds not among the host: for HE, THE KING, is near, the strength of streamy Selma. Gladness brightens the hero. We hear his words with joy.

" Like the coming forth of winds, is the sound of Selma's sons! They are mountain waters, determined in their course. Hence is Fingal renowned. Hence is his name in other lands. He was not a lonely beam in danger; for your steps were always near! But never was Fingal a dreadful form, in your presence, darkened into wrath. My voice was no thunder to your ears. Mine eyes sent forth no death. When the haughty appeared, I beheld them not. They were forgot at my feasts. Like mist they melted away. A young beam is before you! Few are his paths to war! They are few, but he is valiant. De-

* It was to this valley Sul-malla retired, during the last and decisive battle between Fingal and Cathmor. It is described in the seventh book, where it is called the vale of Lona. *M.*—Lona, is a very poetical name, and I think Macpherson derives it from *Lonely*—which might still be applied to many of the Glens near the chain of Cromla and Mora. *C.*—And the residence of a Druid,

fend my dark-haired son. Bring Fillan back with joy. Hereafter he may stand alone. His form is like his fathers. His soul is a flame of their fire. Son of car-borne Morni, move behind the youth. Let thy voice reach his ear, from the skirts of war. Not unobserved rolls battle, before thee, breaker of the shields!

The king strode, at once, away to Cormul's lofty rock. Intermitting, darts the light, from his shield, as slow the king of heroes moves. Sidelong rolls his eye o'er the heath, as forming advance the lines. Graceful fly his half-grey locks round his kingly features, now lightened with dreadful joy. Wholly mighty is the chief! Behind him dark and slow I moved. Straight came forward the strength of Gaul. His shield hung loose on its thong. He spoke, in haste, to Ossian. "Bind *, son of Fingal, this shield! Bind it high to the side of Gaul. The foe may behold it, and think I lift the spear. If I should fall, let my tomb be hid in the field; for fall I must without fame. Mine arm cannot lift the steel. Let not Evir-choma hear it, to blush between her locks. Fillan, the mighty behold us! Let us not forget the strife. Why should THEY come, from their hills, to aid our flying field?"

He strode onward, with the sound of his shield. My voice pursued him as he went. "Can the son of Morni fall, without his fame in Erin? But the deeds of the mighty are forgot by themselves. They rush

* It is necessary to remember, that Gaul was wounded; which occasions his requiring here the assistance of Ossian, to bind his shield on his side.

careless over the fields of renown. Their words are never heard!" I rejoiced over the steps of the chief. I strode to the rock of the king, where he sat, in his wandering locks, amid the mountain-wind!

In two dark ridges bend the hosts, toward each other, at Lubar. Here Foldath rises a pillar of darkness: there brightens the youth of Fillan. Each, with his spear in the stream, sent forth the voice of war. Gaul struck the shield of Selma. At once they plunge in battle! Steel pours its gleam on steel: like the fall of streams shone the field, when they mix their foam together from two dark-browed rocks! Behold he comes, the son of fame! He lays the people low! Deaths sit on blasts around him! Warriors strew thy paths, O Fillan!

Rothmor,* the shield of warriors, stood between two chinky rocks. Two oaks, which winds had bent from high, spread their branches on either side. He rolls his darkening eyes on Fillan, and, silent, shades his friends. Fingal saw the approaching fight. The hero's soul arose. But as the stone of Loda † falls,

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* Roth-mar, *the sound of the sea before a storm*. Drumanard, *high-ridge*. Cul-min, *soft-haired*. Cull-allin, *beautiful locks*. Strutha, *streamy river*.

† By the stone of Loda is meant a place of worship among the Scandinavians. The Caledonians, in their many expeditions to Orkney and Scandinavia, became acquainted with some of the rites of the religion which prevailed in those countries, and the ancient poetry frequently alludes to them. There are some ruins, and circular pales of stone, remaining still in Orkney, and the islands of Shetland, which retain, to this day, the name of *Leda* or *Loden*. They seem to have differed materially, in their construction, from those Druidical monuments which remain in Britain, and the western isles. The places of worship among the

shook, at once, from rocking Druman-ard, when spirits heave the earth in their wrath; so fell blue-shielded Rothmar.

Near are the steps of Culmin. The youth came, bursting into tears. Wrathful he cut the wind, ere yet he mixed his strokes with Fillan. He had first bent the bow with Rothmar, at the rock of his own blue streams. There they had marked the place of the roe, as the sun-beam flew over the fern. Why, son of Cul-allin! Why, Culmin, dost thou rush on that beam * of light? It is a fire that consumes. Son of Cul-allin, retire. Your fathers were not equal, in the glittering strife of the field. The mother of Culmin remains in the hall. She looks forth on blue-rolling Strutha. A whirlwind rises, on the stream, dark-eddying round the ghost of her son. His dogs †

Scandinavians were originally rude and unadorned. In after ages, when they opened a communication with other nations, they adopted their manners, and built temples. That at Upsal, in Sweden, was amazingly rich and magnificent. Harquin, of Norway, built one, near Drontheim, little inferior to the former; and it went always under the name of Loden. *Mallet, introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarc.*

* The poet, metaphorically, calls Fillan a beam of light. Culmin, mentioned here, was the son of Clonmar, chief of Strutha, by the beautiful Cul-allin. She was so remarkable for the beauty of her person, that she is introduced, frequently, in the similes and allusions of ancient poetry. *Mar Chululuin Strutha nan sian; Lovely as Cul-allin of Strutha of the storms.*

† Dogs were thought to be sensible of the death of their master, let it happen at ever so great a distance. It was also the opinion of the times, that the arms which warriors left at home became bloody, when they themselves fell in battle. It was from those signs that Cul-allin is supposed to understand that her son is killed; in which she is confirmed by the appearance of his

are howling in their place. His shield is bloody in the hall. "Art thou fallen, my fair-haired son, in Erin's dismal war?"

As a roe, pierced in secret, lies panting, by her wonted streams; the hunter surveys her feet of wind. He remembers her stately bounding before. So lay the son of Cul-allin beneath the eye of Fillan. His hair is rolled in a little stream. His blood wanders on his shield. Still his hand holds the sword, that failed him in the midst of danger. "Thou art fallen," said Fillan, "ere yet thy fame was heard. Thy father sent thee to war. He expects to hear of thy deeds. He is grey, perhaps, at his streams. His eyes are toward Moi-lena. But thou shalt not return with the spoil of the fallen foe."

Fillan pours the flight of Erin before him, over the resounding heath. But, man on man, fell Morven before the dark-red rage of Foldath; for, far on the field, he poured the roar of half his tribes. Dermid stands before him in wrath. The sons of Selma gathered around. But his shield is cleft by Foldath. His people fly over the heath.

Then said the foe, in his pride, "They have fled. My fame begins! Go, Malthos, go bid Cathmor guard the dark-rolling of ocean; that Fingal may not escape from my sword. He must lie on earth. Beside some fen shall his tomb be seen. It shall rise

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ghost. Her sudden and short exclamation is more judicious in the poet, than if she had extended her complaints to a greater length. The attitude of the fallen youth, and Fillan's reflexions over him, come forcibly back on the mind, when we consider, that the supposed situation of the father of Culmin, was so similar to that of Fingal, after the death of Fillan himself.

without a song. His ghost shall hover, in mist, over the reedy pool."

Malthos heard, with darkening doubt. He rolled his silent eyes. He knew the pride of Foldath. He looked up to Fingal on his hills; then darkly turning, in doubtful mood, he plunged his sword in war.

In Clono's * narrow vale, where bend two trees

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* This valley had its name from Clono, son of Lethmal of Lora, one of the ancestors of Dermid, the son of Duthno. His history is thus related in an old poem. In the days of Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first king of Ireland, Clono passed over into that kingdom, from Caledonia, to aid Conar against the Fir-bolg. Being remarkable for the beauty of his person, he soon drew the attention of Sulmin, the young wife of an Irish chief. She disclosed her passion, which was not properly returned by the Caledonian. The lady sickened, through disappointment, and her love for Clono came to the ears of her husband. Fired with jealously, he vowed revenge. Clono, to avoid his rage, departed from Temora, in order to pass over into Scotland; and being benighted in the valley mentioned here, he laid him down to sleep. *There Lethmal descended in the dreams of Clono, and told him that danger was near.*

Ghost of Lethmal.

"Arise from thy bed of moss; son of low-laid Lethmal arise. The sound of the coming of foes, descends along the wind.

Clono.

"Whose voice is that, like many streams, in the season of my rest?

Ghost of Lethmal.

"Arise, thou dweller of the souls of the lovely; son of Lethmal, arise.

Clono.

"How dreary is the night! The moon is darkened in the sky; red are the paths of ghosts along its sullen face! Green-skirted meteors set around. Dull is the roaring of streams, from the valley of dim forms. I hear thee, spirit of my father, on the

above the stream, dark, in his grief, stood Duthno's silent son. The blood pours from the side of Dermid. His shield is broken near. His spear leans against a stone. Why, Dermid, why so sad? "I hear the roar of battle. My people are alone. My steps are slow on the heath; and no shield is mine. Shall he then prevail? It is then after Dermid is slow! I will call thee forth, O Foldath! and meet thee yet in fight."

He took his spear, with dreadful joy. The son of Morni came. "Stay, son of Duthno, stay thy speed. Thy steps are marked with blood. No bossy shield is thine. Why shouldst thou fall unarmed?" "Son of Morni! give thou thy shield. It has often rolled back the war. I shall stop the chief in his course. Son of Morni! behold that stone! It lifts its grey head through grass. There dwells a chief of the race of Dermid. Place me there in night."

He slowly rose against the hill. He saw the troubled field: The gleaming ridges of battle, disjoined and broken round. As distant fires, on heath by night, now seem as lost in smoke: now rearing their red streams on the hill, as blow or cease the winds: so met the intermitting war the eye of broad-shielded Dermid. Through the host are the strides of Foldath, like some

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eddying course of the wind. I hear thee; but thou bendest not, forward, thy tall form, from the skirts of night."

As Clono prepared to depart, the husband of Sulmin came up, with his numerous attendants. Clono defended himself, but, after a gallant resistance, he was overpowerd and slain. He was buried in the place where he was killed, and the valley was called after his name. Dermid in his request to Gaul the son of Morni, which immediately follows this paragraph, alludes to the tomb of Clono, and his own connection with that unfortunate chief.

dark ship on wintry waves, when she issues from between two isles, to sport on resounding ocean!

Dermid, with rage, beholds his course. He strives to rush along. But he fails amid his steps; and the big tear comes down. He sounds his father's horn. He thrice strikes his bossy shield. He calls thrice the name of Foldath, from his roaring tribes. Foldath, with joy, beholds the chief. He lifts aloft his bloody spear. As a rock is marked with streams, that fell troubled down its side in a storm; so. streaked with wandering blood, is the dark chief of Moma! The host, on either side withdraw from the contending of kings. They raise, at once, their gleaming points. Rushing comes Fillan of Selma. Three paces back Foldath withdraws, dazzled with that beam of light, which came, as issuing from a cloud, to save the wounded chief. Growing in his pride he stands. He calls forth all his steel.

As meet two broad-winged eagles, in their sounding strife, in winds: so rush the two chiefs, on Moi-lena, into gloomy fight. By turns are the steps of the kings * forward on their rocks above; for now the dusky war seems to descend on their swords. Cathmor feels the joy of warriors, on his mossy hill: their joy in secret, when dangers rise to match their souls. His eye is not turned on Lubar, but on Selma's dreadful king. He beholds him, on Mora, rising in his arms.

Foldath † falls on his shield. The spear of Fillan

* Fingal and Cathmor. *M.*--For Mora, *vide* the map. *C.*

† The fall of Foldath, if we may believe tradition, was predicted to him, before he had left his own country to join Cairbar, in his designs on the Irish throne. He went to the cave of Moma,

pierced the king. Nor looks the youth on the fallen, but onward rolls the war. The hundred voices of death arise. "Stay, son of Fingal, stay thy speed. Beholdest thou not that gleaming form, a dreadful sign of death? Awaken not the king of Erin. Return, son of blue-eyed Clatho."

Malthos * beholds Foldath low. He darkly stands

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to enquire of the spirits of his fathers, concerning the success of the enterprise of Cairbar. The responses of oracles are always attended with obscurity, and liable to a double meaning: Foldath, therefore, put a favourable interpretation on the prediction, and pursued his adopted plan of aggrandising himself with the family of Atha.

Foldath, *addressing the spirits of his fathers.*

"Dark, I stand in your presence; fathers of Foldath, hear. Shall my steps pass over Atha, to Ullin of the roes?"

The Answer.

"Thy steps shall pass over Atha, to the green dwelling of kings. There shall thy stature arise, over the fallen, like a pillar of thunder-clouds. There, terrible in darkness, shalt thou stand, till the *reflected beam*, or *Clon-cath* of Moruth, come; Moruth of many streams, that roars in distant lands."

Clonclath, or *reflected beam*, say my traditional authors, was the name of the sword of Fillan; so that it was, in the latent signification of the word *Cloncath*, that the deception lay. My principal reason for introducing this note, is, that this tradition serves to shew, that the religion of the Fir-bolg differed from that of the Caledonians, as we never find the latter enquiring of the spirits of their deceased ancestors. *M.*—Frequently. *C.*

* The characters of Foldath and Malthos are sustained. They were both dark and surly, but each in a different way. Foldath was impetuous and cruel. Malthos stubborn and incredulous. Their attachment to the family of Atha was equal; their bravery in battle the same. Foldath was vain and ostentatious: Malthos unindulgnet but generous. His behaviour here, towards his enemy Foldath, shews, that a good heart often lies concealed under a gloomy and sullen character.

above the chief. Hatred is rolled from his soul. He seems a rock in a desert, on whose dark side are the trickling of waters; when the slow-sailing mist has left it, and all its trees are blasted with winds. He spoke to the dying hero, about the narrow house. "Whether shall thy grey stone rise in Ullin, or in Moma's * woody land? where the sun looks, in secret, on the blue streams of Dalrutho †? There are the steps of thy daughter, blue-eyed Dardu-lena!"

"Rememberest thou her," said Foldath, "because no son is mine: no youth to roll the battle before him, in revenge of me? Malthos, I am revenged. I was not peaceful in the field. Raise the tombs of those I have slain, around my narrow house. Often shall I forsake the blast, to rejoice above their graves; when I behold them spread around, with their long-whistling grass."

His soul rushed to the vale of Moma, to Dardulena's dreams, where she slept, by Dal-rutho's stream, returning from the chase of the hinds. Her bow is near the maid, unstrung. The breezes fold her long hair on her breasts. Cloathed in the beauty of youth,

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* Moma was the name of a country in the south of Connaught, once famous for being the residence of an Arch-Druid. The cave of Moma was thought to be inhabited by the spirits of the chiefs of the Fir-bolg, and their posterity sent to enquire there, as to an oracle, concerning the issue of their wars.

† Dal-rhuäth, *parched or sandy field*. The etymology of Dardulena is uncertain. The daughter of Foldath was, probably, so called, from a place in Ulster, where her father had defeated part of the adherents of Arthô, king of Ireland. Dar-dulena, *the dark wood of Moi-lena*. As Foldath was proud and ostentatious, it would appear, that he transferred the name of a place, where he himself had been victorious, to his daughter.

the love of heroes lay. Dark-bending, from the skirts of the wood, her wounded father seemed to come. He appeared at times, then hid himself in mist. Bursting into tears she rose. She knew that the chief was low. To her came a beam from his soul, when folded in its storms. Thou wert the last of his race, O blue-eyed Dardu-lena!

Wide spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hangs forward on their steps. He strews, with dead, the heath. Fingal rejoices over his son. Blue-shielded Cathmor rose *.

Son of Alpin, bring the harp. Give Fillan's praise to the wind. Raise high his praise, in mine ear, while yet he shines in war.

"Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall! Behold that early beam of thine! The host is withered in its course. No further look, it is dark. Light-trembling from the harp, strike, virgins, strike the sound. No hunter he descends from the dewy haunt of the bounding roe. He bends not his bow on the wind; nor sends his grey arrow abroad.

"Deep-folded in red war! See battle roll against

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* The suspence, in which the mind of the reader is left here, conveys the idea of Fillan's danger more forcibly home, than any description that could be introduced. There is a sort of eloquence, in silence with propriety. A minute detail of the circumstances of an important scene is generally cold and insipid. The human mind, free and fond of thinking for itself, is disgusted to find every thing done by the poet. It is, therefore, his business only to mark the most striking outlines, and to allow the imaginations of his readers to finish the figure for themselves.

The book ends in the afternoon of the third day, from the opening of the poem.

his side. Striding 'amid the ridgy strife, he pours the deaths of thousands forth. Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends from the skirt of winds. The troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him. Islands shake their heads on the heaving seas! Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall *! "

* For the scenes of this battle "wide spreading over Lubar," *vide* the map. *C.*

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK VI.

This book opens with a speech of Fingal, who sees Cathmor descending to the assistance of his flying army. The king dispatches Ossian to the relief of Fillan. He himself retires behind the rock of Cormul, to avoid the sight of the engagement between his son and Cathmor. Ossian advances. The descent of Cathmor described. He rallies the army, renews the battle, and, before Ossian could arrive, engages Fillan himself. Upon the approach of Ossian, the combat between the two heroes ceases. Ossian and Cathmor prepare to fight, but, night coming on, prevents them. Ossian returns to the place where Cathmor and Fillan fought. He finds Fillan mortally wounded, and leaning against a rock. Their discourse. Fillan dies; his body is laid, by Ossian, in a neighbouring cave. The Caledonian army return to Fingal. He questions them about his son, and, understanding that he was killed, retires, in silence, to the rock of Cormul. Upon the retreat of the army of Fingal, the Firbolg advance. Cathmor finds Bran, one of the dogs of Fingal, lying on the shield of Fillan, before the entrance of the cave, where the body of that hero lay. His reflections thereupon. He returns, in a melancholy mood, to his army. Malthos endeavours to comfort him, by the example of his father Borbar-duthal. Cathmor retires to rest. The song of Sul-malla concludes the book, which ends about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK VI.

"CATHMOR rises on his hill! Shall Fingal take the sword of Luno? But what should become of thy fame,* son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, fair daughter of Inistore. I shall not quench thy early beam. It shines along my soul. Rise, wood-skirted Mora,* rise between the war and me! Why should Fingal behold the strife, lest his dark-haired warrior should fall! Amidst the song, O Carril, pour the sound of the trembling harp! Here are the voices of rocks! and there the bright tumbling of waters. Father of Oscar, lift the spear; Defend the young in arms. Conceal thy steps from Fillan. He must not know that I doubt his steel. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire!"

He sunk behind his rock, amid the sound of Carril's song. Brightening, in my growing soul, I took the spear of Temora.† I saw, along Moilena, the wild

* Fingal speaks. *M.*—Mora of course lies between the present situation of Fingal, and Temora where Cathmor was; *vide* the map. *C.*

† The *spear of Temora* was that which Oscar had received, in a present, from Cormac, the son of Artho, king of Ireland. It was of it that Cairbar made the pretext for quarrelling with Oscar, at the feast, in the first book.

tumbling of battle; the strife of death, in gleaming rows, disjoined and broken round. Fillan is a beam of fire. From wing to wing is his wasteful course. The ridges of war melt before him. They are rolled, in smoke, from the fields!

Now is the coming forth of Cathmor, in the armour of kings! Dark-waves the eagle's wing, above his helmet of fire. Unconcerned are his steps, as if they were to the chase of Erin. He raises, at times, his terrible voice. Erin, abashed, gathers round. Their souls return back, like a stream. They wonder at the steps of their fear. He rose, like the beam of the morning, on a haunted heath: the traveller looks back, with bending eye, on the field of dreadful forms! Sudden, from the rock of Moi-lena, are Sul-malla's trembling steps. An oak takes the spear from her hand. Half-bent she looses the lance. But then are her eyes on the king, from amid her wandering locks! No friendly strife is before thee! No light contending of boys, as when the youth of * Inis-huna come forth beneath the eye of Conmor!

As the rock of Runo, which takes the passing clouds as they fly, seems growing, in gathered darkness, over the streamy heath; so seems the chief of Atha taller, as gather his people around. As different blasts fly over the sea, each behind its dark-blue wave, so Cathmor's words, on every side, pour his warriors

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* Clu-ba, *winding bay;* an arm of the sea in Inis-huna, or the western coast of South-Britain. It was in this bay that Cathmor was wind-bound when Sul-malla came, in the disguise of a young warrior, to accompany him in his voyage to Ireland. Conmor, the father of Sul-malla, as is insinuated at the close of the fourth book, was dead before the departure of his daughter. *M.*—I cannot subscribe to this scite of Inis-huna, *vide* my reasons in the *data* of the man. *C.*

forth Nor silent on his hill is Fillan. He mixes his words with his echoing shield. An eagle he seemed, with sounding wings, calling the wind to his rock, when he sees the coming forth of the roes, on Lutha's * rushy field!

Now they bend forward in battle. Death's hundred voices arise. The kings, on either side, were like fires on the souls of the hosts. Ossian bounded along. High rocks and trees rush tall between the war and me. But I hear the noise of steel, between my clanging arms. Rising, gleaming, on the hill, I behold the backward steps of hosts: their backward steps, on either side, and wildly-looking eyes. The chiefs were met in dreadful fight! The two blue-shielded kings! Tall and dark, through gleams of steel, are seen the striving heroes! I rush. My fears for Fillan fly, burning across my soul.

I come. Nor Cathmor flies; nor yet comes on; he sidelong stalks along. An icy rock, cold, tall, he seems. I call forth all my steel. Silent, awhile we stride, on either side of a rushing stream; then, sudden turning, all at once, we raise our pointed spears! We raise our spears, but night comes down. It is dark and silent round; but where the distant steps of hosts are sounding over the heath!

I come to the place where Fillan fought. Nor voice, nor sound is there. A broken helmet lies on earth, a buckler cleft in twain. Where, Fillan, where art thou, young chief of echoing Morven? He hears me leaning

* Lutha was the name of a valley in Morven. There dwelt Toscar the son of Conloch, the father of Malvina, who, upon that account, is often called the *maid of Lutha*. Lutha signifies *swift stream*.

on a rock, which bends its grey head over the stream. He hears; but sullen, dark he stands. At length I saw the hero!

"Why standest thou, robed in darkness, son of woody Selma? Bright is thy path, my brother, in this dark-brown field! Long has been thy strife in battle! Now the horn of Fingal is heard. Ascend to the cloud of thy father, to his hill of feasts. In the evening mist he sits, and hears the sound of Carril's harp, Carry joy to the aged, young breakers of the shields!"

"Can the vanquished carry joy? Ossian, no shield is mine? It lies broken on the field. The eagle-wing of my helmet is torn. It is when foes fly before them, that fathers delight in their sons. But their sighs burst forth in secret, when their young warriors yield. No: Fillan shall not behold the king! Why should the hero mourn?"

"Son of blue-eyed Clatho! O Fillan, awake not my soul! Wert thou not a burning fire before him? Shall he not rejoice? Such fame belongs not to Ossian; yet is the king still a sun to me. He looks on my steps with joy. Shadows never rise on his face. Ascend, O Fillan, to Mora!* His feast is spread in the folds of mist."

"Ossian! give me that broken shield: these feathers that are rolled in the wind. Place them near to Fillan, that less of his fame may fall. Ossian, I begin to fail. Lay me in that hollow rock. Raise no stone above, lest one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields, fallen without renown. Let thy

* From this it appears that Fingal still remained on *Mora*, looking down on the battle by the *Lubar*. *Vide* the Map. C.

voice ALONE send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard no where dwells the lost beam of Clatho*!

"Is thy spirit on the eddying winds, O Fillan, young breaker of shields! Joy pursue my hero, through his folded clouds. The forms of thy fathers, O Fillan, bend to receive their son. I behold the spreading of their fire on Mora: the blue-rolling of their misty wreaths. Joy meet thee, my brother! But we are dark and sad! I behold the foe round the aged. I behold the wasting away of his fame. Thou art left alone in the field, O grey-haired king of Selma!"

I laid him in the hollow rock, at the roar of the nightly stream. One red star looked in on the hero. Winds lift, at times, his locks. I listen. No sound is

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* A dialogue between Clatho, the mother, and Bosmina, the sister, of Fillan.

CLATHO.

"Daughter of Fingal, arise! thou light between thy locks. Lift thy fair head from rest soft-gliding sun-beam of Selma! I beheld thy arms, on thy breast, white tossed amidst thy wandering locks: when the rustling breeze of the morning came from the desert of streams. Hast thou seen thy fathers, Bos-mina, descending in thy dreams? Arise, daughter of Clatho; dwells their aught of grief in thy soul?"

BOS-MINA.

"A thin form passed before me, fading as it flew: like the darkening wave of a breeze, along a field of grass. Descend, from thy wall, O harp, and call back the soul of Bos-mina; it has rolled away, like a stream. I hear thy pleasant sound. I hear thee, O harp, and my voice shall rise.

"How often shall you rush to war, ye dwellers of my soul? Your paths are distant, kings of men, in Erin of blue streams.

heard. The warrior slept! As lightning on a cloud, a thought came rushing along my soul. My eyes roll in fire: my stride was in the clang of steel. "I will find thee, king of Erin! in the gathering of thy thousands find thee. Why should that cloud escape that quenched our early beam? Kindle your meteors on your hills, my fathers. Light my daring steps. I will consume in wrath*. But should not I return! The king is without a son, grey-haired among his foes!

Lift thy wing, thou southern breeze, from Clono's darkening heath: spread the sails of Fingal towards the bays of his land.

"But who is that, in his strength, darkening in the presence of war? His arm stretches to the foe, like the beam of the sickly sun; when his side is crusted with darkness; and he rolls his dismal course through the sky. Who is it, but the father of Bosmina? Shall he return till danger is past!

"Fillan, thou art a beam by his side; beautiful, but terrible, is thy light. Thy sword is before thee, a blue fire of night. When shalt thou return to thy roes; to the streams of thy rushy fields? When shall I behold thee from Mora, while winds strew my long locks on their blasts! But shall a young eagle return from the field where the heroes fall!"

CLATHO.

"Soft, as the song of Loda, is the voice of Selma's maid. Pleasant to the ear of Clatho is the name of the breaker of shields. Behold, the king comes from ocean: the shield of Morven is borne by bards. The foe has fled before him, like the departure of mist. I hear not the sounding wings of my eagle; the rushing forth of the son of Clatho. Thou art dark, O Fingal; shall the warrior never return?" * * * *

* Here the sentence is designedly left unfinished. The sense is, that he was resolved, like a destroying fire, to consume Cathmor, who had killed his brother. In the midst of this resolution,

His arm is not as in the days of old. His fame grows dim in Erin. Let me not behold him, laid low in his latter field. But can I return to the king? Will he not ask about his son? "Thou oughtest to defend young Fillan." Ossian will meet the foe? Green Erin thy sounding tread is pleasant to my ear, I rush on thy ridgy host, to shun the eyes of Fingal. I hear the voice of the king, on Mora's misty top! He calls his two sons! I come, my father, in my grief. I come like an eagle, which the flame of the night met in the desert, and spoiled of half his wings!"

Distant*, round the king, on Mora, the broken ridges of Morven are rolled. They turned their eyes: each

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the situation of Fingal suggests itself to him, in a very strong light. He resolves to return to assist the king in prosecuting the war. But then his shame for not defending his brother, recurs to him. He is determined again to go and find out Cathmor. We may consider him, as in the act of advancing towards the enemy, when the horn of Fingal sounded on Mora, and called back his people to his presence. This soliloquy is natural: the resolutions which so suddenly follow one another, are expressive of a mind extremely agitated with sorrow and conscious shame, yet the behaviour of Ossian, in his execution of the commands of Fingal, is so irreprehensible, that it is not easy to determine where he failed in his duty. The truth is, that when men fail in designs which they ardently wish to accomplish, they naturally blame themselves, as the chief cause of their disappointment.

* "This scene," says an ingenious writer, and a good judge, "is solemn. The poet always places his chief character amidst objects which favour the sublime. The face of the country, the night, the broken remains of a defeated army, and, above all, the attitude and silence of Fingal himself, are circumstances calculated to impress an awful idea on the mind. Ossian is most successful in his night-descriptions. Dark images suited the melan-

darkly bends, on his own ashen spear. Silent stood the king in the midst. Thought on thought rolled over his soul. As waves on a secret mountain-lake, each with its back of foam. He looked; no son appeared, with his long-beaming spear. The sighs rose, crowding, from my soul; but he concealed his grief. At length I stood beneath an oak. No voice of mine was heard. What could I say to Fingal in his hour of woe? His words rose, at length, in the midst: the people shrunk backward as he spoke*.

choly temper of his mind. His poems were all composed after the active part of his life was over, when he was blind, and had survived all the companions of his youth: we therefore find a vein of melancholy thrown over the whole." *Blair.*

* I owe the first paragraph of the following note to the same pen.

"The abashed behaviour of the army of Fingal proceeds rather from shame than fear. The king was not of a tyrannical disposition; He as he professeth himself in the fifth book, *never was a dreadful form, in their presence, darkened into wrath. His voice was no thunder to their ears: his eye sent forth no death.* The first ages of society are not the times of arbitrary power. As the wants of mankind are few, they retain their independence. It is an advanced state of civilization that moulds the mind to that submission to government, of which ambitious magistrates take advantage, and raise themselves into absolute power."

It is a vulgar error, that the common Highlanders lived, in abject slavery, under their chiefs. Their high ideas of, and attachment to, the heads of their families probably, led the unintelligent into this mistake. When the honour of the tribe was concerned, the commands of the chief were obeyed without restriction: but, if individuals were oppressed, they threw themselves into the arms of a neighbouring clan, assumed a new name, and were encouraged and protected. The fear of this desertion, no doubt, made the chiefs cautious in their government. As their consequence,

"Where is the son of Selma, he who led in war? I behold not his steps, among my people, returning from the field. Fell the young bounding roe, who was so stately on my hills? He fell; for ye are silent. The shield of war is cleft in twain. Let his armour be near to Fingal; and the sword of dark-brown Luno. I am waked on my hills; with mourning I descend to war."

High * on Cormul's rock, an oak is flaming to the

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in the eyes of others, was in proportion to the number of their people, they took care to avoid every thing that tended to diminish it.

It was but very lately that the authority of the laws extended to the Highlands. Before that time the clans were governed, in civil affairs, not by the verbal commands of the chief, but by what they called *Clechda*, or the traditional precedents of their ancestors. When differences happened between individuals, some of the oldest men in the tribe were chosen umpires between the parties, to decide according to the *Clechda*. The chief interposed his authority, and, invariably, enforced the decision. In their wars, which were frequent, on account of family-feuds, the chief was less reserved in the execution of his authority; and even then he seldom extended it to the taking the life of any of his tribe. No crime was capital, except murder; and that was very unfrequent in the Highlands. No corporal punishment of any kind was inflicted. The memory of an affront of this sort would remain, for ages, in a family, and they would seize every opportunity to be revenged, unless it came immediately from the hands of the chief himself; in that case it was taken, rather as a fatherly correction, than a legal punishment for offences.

* This rock of Cormul is often mentioned in the preceding part of the poem. It was on it Fingal and Ossian stood to view the battle. The custom of retiring from the army, on the night prior to their engaging in battle, was universal among the kings of the Caledonians. Trenmor, the most renowned of the ancestors of Fingal, is mentioned as the first who instituted this custom. Succeeding bards attributed it to a hero of a latter period. In an old

wind. The grey skirts of mist are rolled around; thither strode the king in his wrath. Distant from the host he always lay, when battle burnt within his soul. On two spears hung his shield on high; the gleaming sign of death; that shield, which he was wont to strike, by night, before he rushed to war. It was then his warriors knew, when the king was to lead in strife; for never was this buckler heard, till the wrath of Fingal arose. Unequal were his steps on high, as he shone in the beam of the oak; he was dreadful as the form of the spirits of night, when he clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist, and, issuing forth, on the troubled ocean, mounts the car of winds.

Nor settled, from the storm, is Erin's sea of war! they glitter, beneath the moon, and, low-humming, still roll on the field. Alone are the steps of Cathmor, before them on the heath; he hangs forward, with all his arms, on Morven's flying host. Now had he come to the mossy cave, where Fillan lay in night. One tree was bent above the stream, which glittered over

poem, which begins with *Mac-Arcath na ceud frôl*, this custom of retiring from the army before an engagement, is numbered among the wise institutions of Fergus, the son of Arc or Arcath, the first king of Scots. I shall here translate the passage; in some other note I may, probably, give all that remains of the poem. *Fergus of the hundred streams, son of Arcath who fought of old: thou didst first retire at night: when the foe rolled before thee in echoing fields. Nor bending in rest is the king: he gathers battles in his soul. Fly, son of the stranger! with morn he shall rush abroad.* When, or by whom, this poem was written, is uncertain. *M.*—I am often led to suspect that the translator frequently confounds and varies names.—Hence I am of opinion that *Cronleach*—*Cromla*—*Crommal* and *Cormul*—are the same hill. *C.*

the rock. There shone to the moon the broken shield of Clatho's son; and near it, on grass, lay hairy-footed Bran *. He had missed the chief on Mora, and searched him along the wind. He thought that the blue-eyed hunter slept; he lay upon his shield. No blast came over the heath unknown to bounding Bran.

Cathmor saw the white-breasted dog; he saw the broken shield. Darkness is blown back on his soul; he remembers the falling away of the people. They come, a stream; are rolled away; another race succeeds. "But some mark the fields, as they pass, with their own mighty names. The heath, through dark-brown years, is theirs; some blue stream winds

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* I remember to have met with an old poem, wherein a story of this sort is very happily introduced. In one of the invasions of the Danes, Ullin-clundu, a considerable chief, on the western coast of Scotland, was killed in a rencounter with a flying party of the enemy, who had landed, at no great distance, from the place of his residence. The few followers who attended him were also slain. The young wife of Ullin-clundu, who had not heard of his fall, fearing the worst, on account of his long delay, alarmed the rest of his tribe, who went in search of him along the shore. They did not find him; and the beautiful widow became disconsolate. At length he was discovered, by means of his dog, who sat on a rock beside the body, for some days. The stanza concerning the dog, whose name was Du-chos, or *Blackfoot*, is descriptive.

"Dark-sided Duchos! feet of wind! cold is thy seat on rocks. He (the dog) sees the roe: his ears are high; and half he bounds away. He looks around; but Ullin sleeps; he droops again his head. The winds come past; dark Duchos thinks that Ullin's voice is there. But still he beholds him silent, laid amidst the waving heath. Dark sided Duchos, his voice no more shall send thee over the heath!"

to their fame. Of these be the chief of Atha, when he lays him down on earth. Often may the voice of future times meet Cathmor in the air; when he strides from wind to wind, or folds himself in the wing of a storm."

Green Erin gathered round the king, to hear the voice of his power. Their joyful faces bend, unequal, forward, in the light of the oak. They who were terrible were removed: Lubar * winds again in their host. Cathmor was that beam from heaven which shone when his people were dark. He was honoured in the midst. Their souls rose with ardour around. The king alone no gladness shewed; no stranger he to war!

"Why is the king so sad?" said Malthos eagle-eyed. "Remains there a foe at Lubar? Lives there among them who can lift the spear? Not so peaceful was thy father, Borbar-duthul †, king of spears. His

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* In order to illustrate this passage, it is proper to lay before the reader the scene of the two preceding battles. Between the hills of Mora and Lora lay the plain of Moi-lena, through which ran the river Lubar. The first battle, wherein Gaul, the son of Morni, commanded on the Caledonian side, was fought on the banks of Lubar. As there was little advantage obtained on either side, the armies, after the battle, retained their former positions. *M.*—The hill now known as Lysle-hill, corresponds with the position of Lora. *C.*

In the second battle, wherein Fillan commanded, the Irish, after the fall of Foldath, were driven up the hill of Lora; but, upon the coming of Cathmor to their aid, they regained their former situation, and drove back the Caledonians, in their turn: so that *Lubar winded again in their host.*

† Borbar-duthul, the father of Cathmor, was the brother of that Colc-ulla, who is said, in the beginning of the fourth book, to have rebelled against Cormac king of Ireland. Borbar-duthul

rage was a fire that always burned; his joy over fallen foes was great. Three days feasted the grey-haired hero, when he heard that Calmar fell; Calmar, who aided the race of Ullin, from Lara of the streams. Often did he feel, with his hands, the steel which, they said, had pierced his foe. He felt it with his hands, for Borbar-duthul's eyes had failed. Yet was the king a sun to his friends; a gale to lift their branches round. Joy was around him in his halls: he loved the sons of Bolga. His name remains in Atha, like the awful memory of ghosts, whose presence was terrible, but they blew the storm away. Now let the voices * of Erin raise the soul of the king; he that shone when war was dark, and laid the mighty low. Fonar, from that grey-browed rock, pour the tale of other times: pour it on wide-skirted Erin, as it settles round."

"To me," said Cathmor, "no song shall rise; nor

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seems to have retained all the prejudice of his family against the succession of the posterity of Conar, on the Irish throne. From this short episode we learn some facts which tend to throw light on the history of the times. It appears, that, when Swaran invaded Ireland, he was only opposed by the Caël, who possessed Ulster, and the north of that island. Calmar, the son of Matha, whose gallant behaviour and death are related in the third book of Fingal, was the only chief of the race of the Fir-bolg, that joined the Caël, or Irish Caledonians, during the invasion of Swaran. The indecent joy, which Borbar-duthul expressed upon the death of Calmar, is well suited with that spirit of revenge, which subsisted, universally, in every country where the feudal system was established. It would appear that some person had carried to Borbar-duthul that weapon, with which, it was pretended, Calmar had been killed.

* *The voices of Erin,* a poetical expression for the bards of Ireland.

Fonar sit on the rock of Lubar. The mighty there are laid low. Disturb not their rushing ghosts. Far, Malthos, far remove the sound of Erin's song. I rejoice not over the foe, when he ceases to lift the spear. With morning we pour our strength abroad. Fingal is wakened on his echoing hill."

Like waves, blown back by sudden winds, Erin retired, at the voice of the king. Deep-rolled into the field of night, they spread their humming tribes. Beneath his own tree, at intervals, each * bard sat

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* Not only the kings, but every petty chief, had anciently their bards attending them in the field; and those bards, in proportion to the power of the chiefs, who retained them, had a number of inferior bards in their train. Upon solemn occasions, all the bards, in the army, would join in one chorus; either when they celebrated their victories, or lamented the death of a person, worthy and renowned, slain in the war. The words were of the composition of the arch-bard, retained by the king himself, who generally attained to that high office on account of his superior genius for poetry. As the persons of the bards were sacred, and the emoluments of their office considerable, the order, in succeeding times, became very numerous and insolent. It would appear, that, after the introduction of Christianity, some served in the double capacity of bards and clergymen. It was from this circumstance that they had the name of *Chlére*, which is, probably, derived from the Latin Clericus. The *Chlére*, be their name derived from what it will, became, at last, a public nuisance; for, taking advantage of their sacred character, they went about, in great bodies, and lived, at discretion, in the houses of their chiefs; till another party, of the same order, drove them away by mere dint of satire. Some of the indelicate disputes of these worthy poetical combatants, are handed down, by tradition, and shew how much the bards, at last, abused the privileges, which the admiration of their countrymen had conferred on the order. It was this insolent behaviour that induced the chiefs to retrench their number, and to take away those privileges which they were

down with his harp. They raised the song, and touched the string: each to the chief he loved. Before a burning oak Sul-malla touched, at times, the harp, she touched the harp, and heard, between, the breezes in her hair. In darkness near, lay the king of Atha, beneath an aged tree. The beam of the oak was turned from him; he saw the maid, but was not seen. His soul poured forth, in secret, when he beheld her fearful eye. "But battle is before thee, son of Borbar-duthul."

Amidst the harp, at intervals, she listened whether the warrior slept. Her soul was up; she longed, in secret, to pour her own sad song. The field is silent. On their wings the blasts of night retire. The bards had ceased; and meteors came, red-winding with their ghosts. The sky grew dark: the forms of the dead were blended with the clouds. But heedless bends the daughter of Conmor, over the decaying flame. Thou wert alone in her soul, car-borne chief of Atha. She raised the voice of the song, and touched the harp between.

"Clun-galo * came; she missed the maid. Where art thou, beam of light? Hunters, from the mossy rock, saw ye the blue-eyed fair? Are her steps on grassy Lumon; near the bed of roes? Ah, me! I behold her bow in the hall. Where art thou, beam of light?"

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no longer worthy to enjoy. Their indolence, and disposition to lampoon, extinguished all the poetical fervour, which distinguished their predecessors, and makes us the less regret the extinction of the order.

* Clun-galo, the wife of Conmor, king of Inis-huna, and the mother of Sul-malla. She is here represented as missing her daughter, after she had fled with Cathmor.

"Cease *, love of Conmor, cease; I hear thee not on the ridgy heath. My eye is turned to the king, whose path is terrible in war. He for whom my soul is up in the season of my rest. Deep-bosomed in war he stands, he beholds me not from his cloud. Why, sun of Sul-malla, dost thou not look forth? I dwell in darkness here; wide over me flies the shadowy mist. Filled with dew are my locks: look thou from thy cloud, O sun of Sul-malla's soul!"

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* Sul-malla replies to the supposed questions of her mother. Towards the middle of this paragraph she calls Cathmor *the sun of her soul*, and continues the metaphor throughout. This book ends, we may suppose, about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA:

AN

Epic Poem.

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK VII.

This book begins about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. The poet describes a kind of mist, which rose by night from the lake of Lego, and was the usual residence of the souls of the dead, during the interval between their decease and the funeral song.* The appearance of the ghost of Fillan above the cave where his body lay. His voice comes to Fingal, on the rock of Cormul. The king strikes the shield of Trenmor, which was an infallible sign of his appearing in arms himself. The extraordinary effect of the sound of the shield. Sul-malla, starting from sleep, awakes Cathmor. Their affecting discourse. She insists with him to sue for peace; he resolves to continue the war. He directs her to retire to the neighbouring valley of Lona, which was the residence of an old Druid, until the battle of the next day should be over. He awakes his army with the sound of his shield. The shield described. Fonar, the bard, at the desire of Cathmor, relates the first settlement of the Firbolg in Ireland, under their leader Larthon. Morning comes. Sul-malla retires to the valley of Lona. A Lyric song concludes the book.

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* Here it is evident that Macpherson confounds the pure air of the Ulster vale with the pestilential vapours, which he before described of the Lake of *Lano*—not *Lego*—in Scandinavia. *C.*

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BOOK VII.

FROM the wood-skirted waters of Leno, ascend, at times, grey-bosomed mists; when the gates of the west are closed, on the sun's eagle-eye. Wide, over Lara's stream, is poured the vapour dark and deep: the moon, like a dim shield, is swimming through its folds. With this, clothe the spirits of old, their sudden gestures on the wind, when they stride, from blast to blast, along the dusky night. Often, blended with the gale, to some warrior's grave,* they roll the mist, a grey dwelling to his ghost, until the songs arise.

A sound came from the desert; it was Conar, king of Inis-fail. He poured his mist on the grave of

* As the mist, which rose from the lake of Leno, † occasioned diseases and death, the bards feigned that it was the residence of the ghosts of the deceased, during the interval between their death, and the pronouncing the funeral elegy over their tombs; for it was not allowable, without that ceremony was performed, for the spirits of the dead to mix with their ancestors, *in their airy halls*. It was the business of the spirit of the nearest relation to the deceased, to take the mist of Leno, and pour it over the grave. We find here Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first king of Ireland, performing this office for Fillan, as it was in the cause of the family of Conar that that hero was killed.

† Leno was a marshy lake in Norway. *C.*

Fillan, at blue-winding Lubar. Dark and mournful sat the ghost, in his grey ridge of smoke. The blast, at times, rolled him together: but the form returned again. It returned with bending eyes, and dark winding of locks of mist.

It was * dark. The sleeping host were still in the skirts of night. The flame decayed, on the hill of Fingal; the king lay lonely on his shield. His eyes were half-closed in sleep: the voice of Fillan came. "Sleeps the husband of Clatho? Dwells the father of the fallen in rest? Am I forgot in the folds of darkness; lonely in the season of night?"

"Why dost thou mix," said the king, "with the dreams of thy father? Can I forget thee, my son, or thy path of fire in the field? Not such come the deeds of the valiant on the soul of Fingal. They are not there a beam of lightning, which is seen, and is then no more. I remember thee, O Fillan! and my wrath begins to rise."

The king took his deathful spear, and struck the deeply sounding shield: his shield that hung high in night, the dismal sign of war! Ghosts fled on every side, and rolled their gathered forms on the wind. Thrice from the winding vale arose the voice of deaths.

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* The following is the singular sentiment of a frigid bard:

"More pleasing to me is the night of Cona, dark-streaming from Ossian's harp; more pleasant it is to me, than a white-bosomed dweller between my arms; than a fair-handed daughter of heroes, in the hour of rest."

Though tradition is not very satisfactory concerning the history of this poet, it has taken care to inform us, that he was *very old* when he wrote the distich, a circumstance which we might have supposed, without the aid of tradition.

The harps * of the bards, untouched, sound mournful over the hill.

He struck again the shield; battles rose in the dreams of his host. The wide-tumbling strife is gleaming over their souls. Blue-shielded kings descend to war. Backward-looking armies fly; and mighty deeds are half-hid, in the bright gleams of steel.

But when the third sound arose, deer started from the clefts of their rocks. The screams of fowl are heard, in the desert, as each flew, frighted on his blast. The sons of Selma half-rose, and half-assumed their spears. But silence rolled back on the host: they knew the shield of the king. Sleep returned to their eyes; the field was dark and still.

No sleep was thine in darkness, blue-eyed daughter of Conmor! Sul-malla heard the dreadful shield, and rose, amid the night. Her steps are towards the king of Atha. "Can danger shake his daring soul!" In doubt, she stands, with bending eyes. Heaven burns with all its stars.

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* It was the opinion of ancient times, that, on the night preceding the death of a person worthy and renowned, the harps of those bards, who were retained by his family, emitted melancholy sounds. This was attributed to *the light touch of ghosts;* who were supposed to have a fore-knowledge of events. The same opinion prevailed long in the north, and the particular sound was called, *the warning voice of the dead. The voice of death,* mentioned in the preceding sentence, was of a different kind. Each person was supposed to have an attendant spirit, who assumed his form and voice, on the night preceding his death, and appeared, to some, in the attitude in which the person was to die. The VOICES OF DEATH were the foreboding shrieks of those spirits.

Again the shield resounds! She rushed. She stopt. Her voice half-rose. It failed. She saw him, amidst his arms, that gleamed to heaven's fire. She saw him dim in his locks, that rose to nightly wind. Away, for fear, she turned her steps. "Why should the king of Erin awake? Thou art not a dream to his rest, daughter of Inis-huna."

More dreadful rings the shield. Sul-malla starts. Her helmet falls. Loud echoes Lubar's rock, as over it rolls the steel. Bursting from the dreams of night, Cathmor half-rose, beneath his tree. He saw the form of the maid, above him, on the rock. A red star, with twinkling beam, looked through her floating hair.

"Who comes through night to Cathmor, in the season of his dreams? Bring'st thou aught of war? Who art thou, son of night! Stand'st thou before me, a form of the times of old? A voice from the fold of a cloud, to warn me of the danger of Erin?"

"Nor lonely scout am I, nor voice from folded cloud," she said; "but I warn thee of the danger of Erin. Dost thou hear that sound? It is not the feeble king of Atha, that rolls his sounds on night."

"Let the warrior roll his sounds," he replied; "to Cathmor they are the sounds of harps. My joy is great, voice of night, and burns over all my thoughts. This is the music of kings, on lonely hills, by night; when they light their daring souls, the sons of mighty deeds! The feeble dwell alone, in the valley of the breeze; where mists lift their morning skirts, from the blue winding streams."

"Not feeble, king of men, were they, the fathers of my race. They dwelt in the folds of battle, in their

distant lands. Yet delights not my soul, in the signs of death! He *, who never yields, comes forth: O send the bard of peace!"

Like a dropping rock, in the desert, stood Cathmor in his tears. Her voice came, a breeze, on his soul, and waked the memory of her land; where she dwelt by her peaceful streams, before he came to the war of Conmor.

"Daughter of strangers," he said—the trembling turned away—"long have I marked thee in my steel, young pine of Inis-huna. But my soul, I said, is folded in a storm. Why should that beam arise, till my steps return in peace? Have I been pale in thy presence, as thou bidst me to fear the king? The time of danger, O maid, is the season of my soul; for then it swells, a mighty stream, and rolls me on the foe."

"Beneath the moss-covered rock of Lona, near his own loud stream; grey in his locks of age, dwells Conmal † king of harps. Above him is his echoing tree, and the dun bounding of roes. The noise of our

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* Fingal is said to have never been overcome in battle. From this proceeded that title of honour which is always bestowed on him in tradition, *Fion gal na buai'*, FINGAL OF VICTORIES. In a poem, just now in my hands, which celebrates some of the great actions of Arthur, the famous British hero, that appellation is often bestowed on him. The poem, from the phraseology, appears to be ancient; and is, perhaps, though that is not mentioned, a translation from the Welsh language.

† Clan-mal, *crooked eye-brow*. From the retired life of this person, it is insinuated, that he was of the order of the Druids; which supposition is not, at all, invalidated by the appellation of *king of harps*, here bestowed on him; for all agree that the bards were of the number of the Druids originally.

strife reaches his ear, as he bends in the thoughts of years. There let thy rest be, Sul-malla, until our battle cease! Until I return, in my arms, from the skirts of the evening mist, that rises, on Lona, round the dwelling of my love."

A light fell on the soul of the maid; it rose kindled before the king. She turned her face to Cathmor, from amidst her waving locks. "Sooner shall the eagle of heaven be torn from the stream of his roaring wind, when he sees the dun prey before him, the young sons of the bounding roe, than thou, O Cathmor, be turned from the strife of renown. Soon may I see thee, warrior, from the skirts of the evening mist, when it is rolled around me, on Lona of the streams. While yet thou art distant far, strike, Cathmor, strike the shield, that joy may return to my darkened soul, as I lean on the mossy rock. But if thou shouldest fall, I am in the land of strangers; O send thy voice, from thy cloud, to the maid of Inis-huna!"

"Young branch of green headed Lumon, why dost thou shake in the storm? Often has Cathmor returned, from darkly-rolling wars. The darts of death are but hail to me; they have often rattled along my shield. I have risen brightened from battle, like a meteor from a stormy cloud. Return not, fair beam, from thy vale, when the roar of battle grows. Then might the foe escape, as from my fathers of old.

"They told to Son-mor *, of Clunar †, who was

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* Són-mor, *tall handsome man.* He was the father of Borbar-duthul, chief of Atha, and grandfather to Cathmor himself.

† Cluan-er, *man of the field.* This chief was killed in battle by

slain by Cormac in fight. Three days darkened Son-mor, over his brother's fall. His spouse beheld the silent king, and foresaw his steps to war. She prepared the bow, in secret, to attend her blue-shielded hero. To her dwelt darkness, at Atha, when he was not there. From their hundred streams, by night, poured down the sons of Alnecma. They had heard the shield of the king, and their rage arose. In clanging arms, they moved along, towards Ullin of the groves. Son-mor struck his shield, at times, the leader of the war.

"Far behind followed Sul-allin*, over the streamy hills. She was a light on the mountain, when they crossed the vale below. Her steps were stately on the vale, when they rose on the mossy hill. She feared to approach the king, who left her in echoing Atha. But when the roar of battle rose; when host was rolled on host; when Son-mor burnt, like the fire of heaven in clouds, with her spreading hair came Sul-allin; for she trembled for her king. He stopt the rushing strife to save the love of heroes. The foe fled by night; Clunar slept without his blood; the blood which ought to be poured upon the warrior's tomb.

"Nor rose the rage of Son-mor, but his days were silent and dark. Sul-allin wandered, by her grey streams, with her tearful eyes. Often did she look on the hero when he was folded in his thoughts. But she shrunk from his eyes, and turned her lone steps away. Battles rose, like a tempest, and drove the mist from his

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Cormac Mac-Conar, king of Ireland, the father of Ros-crana, the first wife of Fingal. The story is alluded to in some ancient poems.

* Suil-alluin, *beautiful;* the wife of Sun-mor.

soul. He beheld, with joy, her steps in the hall, and the white rising of her hands on the harp."

In * his arms strode the chief of Atha, to where his shield hung, high, in night; high on a mossy bough, över Lubar's streamy roar. Seven bosses rose on the shield; the seven voices of the king, which his warriors received, from the wind, and marked over all their tribes.

On each boss is placed a star of night; Can-mathon with beams unshorn; Col-derna rising from a cloud Uloicho robed in mist; and the soft beam of Cathlin glittering on a rock. Smiling, on its own blue wave, Relduratli half-sinks its western light. The red eye of Berthin looks, through a grove, on the hunter, as he returns, by night, with the spoils of the bounding roe. Wide, in the midst, arose the cloudless beams of Tonthéna, that star which looked, by night, on the course of the sea-tossed Larthon: Larthon, the first of Bolga's race, who travelled on the winds†. White-bosomed spread the sails of the king, towards streamy Inis-fail; dun night was rolled before him, with its skirts of mist. Unconstant blew the winds, and rolled him from wave to wave. Then rose the fiery-haired Ton-thèna, and

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* To avoid multiplying notes, I shall give here the signification of the names of the stars, engraved on the shield. Cean-mathon, *head of the bear.* Col-derna, *slant and sharp beam.* Ul-oicho, *ruler of night.* Cath-lin, *beam of the wave.* Reul-durath, *star of the twilight.* Berthin, *fire of the hill.* Ton-thena, *meteor of the waves* These etymologies, excepting that of Cean-mathon, are pretty exact. Of it I am not so certain; for it is not very probable, that the Fir-bolg had distinguished a constellation, so very early as the days of Larthon, by the name of the bear.

† *To travel in the winds,* a poetical expression for sailing.

smiled from her parted cloud. Larthon* blessed the well-known beam, as it faint-gleamed on the deep.

Beneath the spear of Cathmor, rose that voice which awakes the bards. They came, dark-winding, from every side; each with the sound of his harp. Before them rejoiced the king, as the traveller, in the day of the sun; when he hears, far-rolling around, the murmur of mossy streams; streams that burst, in the desert, from the rock of roes.

"Why," said Fonar, "hear we the voice of the king, in the season of his rest? Were the dim forms of

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* Larthon is compounded of *Lear*, sea, and *thon*, wave. This name was given to the chief of the first colony of the Firbolg, who settled in Ireland, on account of his knowledge in navigation. A part of an old poem is still extant, concerning this hero. It abounds with those romantic fables of giants and magicians, which distinguished the compositions of the less ancient bards. The descriptions, contained in it, are ingenious, and proportionable to the magnitude of the persons introduced; but, being unnatural, they are insipid and tedious. Had the bard kept within the bounds of probability, his genius was far from being contemptible. The exordium of his poem is not destitute of merit; but it is the only part of it that I think worthy of being presented to the reader.

"Who first sent the black ship, through ocean, like a whale through the bursting of foam? Look, from thy darkness on Cronath, Ossian of the harps of old! Send thy light on the blue-rolling waters, that I may behold the king. I see him dark in his own shell of oak! sea-tossed Lathorn, thy soul is strong. It is careless as the wind of thy sails; as the wave that rolls by thy side But the silent green isle is before thee, with its sons, who are tall as woody Lumon; Lumon which sends from its top, a thousand streams, white-wandering down its sides."

It may, perhaps, be for the credit of this bard, to translate no more of this poem, for the continuation of his description of the Irish giants betrays his want of judgment.

thy fathers bending in thy dreams? Perhaps they stand on that cloud, and wait for Fonar's song; often they come to the fields where their sons are to lift the spear. Or shall our voice arise for him who lifts the spear no more; he that consumed the field, from Moma of the groves?

"Not forgot is that cloud in war, bard of other times. High shall his tomb rise, on Moi-lena, the dwelling of renown. But, now, roll back my soul to the times of my fathers; to the years when first they rose, on Inis-huna's waves. Nor alone pleasant to Cathmor is the remembrance of wood-covered Lumon. Lumon of the streams, the dwelling of white-bosomed maids.

"Lumon * of the streams, thou risest on Fonar's soul! Thy sun is on thy side, on the rocks of thy bending trees. The dun roe is seen from thy furze; the deer lifts his branchy head; for he sees, at times, the hound, on the half-covered heath. Slow, on the vale, are the steps of maids; the white-armed daughters of the bow: they lift their blue eyes to the hill, from amidst their wandering locks. Not there is the stride of Larthon, chief of Inis-huna. He mounts the wave on his own dark oak, in Cluba's ridgy bay. That oak which he cut from Lumon, to bound along the sea. The maids turn their eyes away, lest the king should be lowly-laid; for never had they seen a ship, dark rider of the wave!

"Now he dares to call the winds, and to mix with

* Lumon was a hill, in Inis-huna, near the residence of Sulmalla. This episode has an immediate connection with what is said of Larthon, in the description of Cathmor's shield.

the mist of ocean. Blue Inis-fail rose, in smoke; but dark-skirted night came down. The sons of Bolga feared. The fiery-haired Ton-théna rose. Culbin's bay received the ship, in the bosom of its echoing woods. There issued a stream from Duthuma's horrid cave; where spirits gleamed, at times, with their half-finished forms.

"Dreams descended on Larthon: he saw seven spirits of his fathers. He heard their half-formed words, and dimly beheld the times to come. He beheld the kings of Atha, the sons of future days. They led their hosts, along the field; like ridges of mist, which winds pour, in autumn, over Atha of the groves.

"Larthon in the hall of Samla,* raised the music of the harp. He went forth to the roes of Erin, to their wonted streams. Nor did he forget green-headed Lumon; he often bounded over his seas, to where white-handed Flathal † looked from the hill of roes. Lumon of the foamy streams, thou risest on Fonar's soul!"

Morning pours from the east. The misty heads of the mountains rise. Valleys shew, on every side, the grey-winding of their streams. His host heard the shield of Cathmor: at once they rose around; like a crowded sea, when first it feels the wings of the wind. The waves know not whither to roll; they lift their troubled heads.

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* Samla, *apparitions*, so called from the vision of Larthon, concerning his posterity.

† Flathal, *heavenly, exquisitely beautiful.* She was the wife of Larthon.

Sad and slow retired Sul-malla to Lona of the streams. She went, and often turned; her blue eyes rolled in tears. But when she came to the rock, that darkly-covered Lona's vale, she looked, from her bursting soul, on the king; and sunk, at once, behind.

Son of Alpin, strike the string. Is there aught of joy in the harp? Pour it then on the soul of Ossian: it is folded in mist. I hear thee, O bard! in my night. But cease the lightly trembling sound. The joy of grief belongs to Ossian, amidst his dark-brown years.

Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds! I hear no sound in thee; is there no spirit's windy skirt now rustling in thy leaves? Often are the steps of the dead, in the dark-eddying blasts; when the moon, a dun shield, from the east, is rolled along the sky.

Ullin, Carril, and Ryno, voices of the days of old! Let me hear you, while yet it is dark, to please and awake my soul. I hear you not, ye sons of song; in what hall of the clouds is your rest? Do you touch the shadowy harp, robed with morning mist, where the rustling sun comes forth from his green-headed waves?

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BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT TO BOOK VIII.

The fourth morning, from the opening of the poem, comes on. Fingal, still continuing in the place, to which he had retired on the preceding night, is seen at intervals, through the mist, which covered the rock of Cormul. The descent of the king is described. He orders Gaul, Dermid, and Carril the bard, to go to the valley of Cluna, and conduct, from thence, to the Caledonian army, Ferad-artho, the son of Cairbre, the only person remaining of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland. The king takes the command of the army, and prepares for battle. Marching towards the enemy, he comes to the cave of Lubar, where the body of Fillan lay. Upon seeing his dog Bran, who lay at the entrance of the cave, his grief returns. Cathmor arranges the Irish army in order of battle. The appearance of that hero. The general conflict is described. The actions of Fingal and Cathmor. A storm. The total rout of the Firbolg. The two kings engage, in a column of mist, on the banks of Lubar. Their attitude and conference after the combat. The death of Cathmor. Fingal resigns *the spear of Trenmor* to Ossian. The ceremonies observed on that occasion. The spirit of Cathmor, in the mean time, appears to Sul-malla, in the valley of Lona. Her sorrow. Evening comes on. A feast is prepared. The coming of Ferad-artho is announced by the song of an hundred bards. The poem closes with a speech of Fingal.

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BOOK VIII.

AS when the wintry winds have seized the waves of the mountain lake, have seized them, in stormy night, and clothed them over with ice; white, to the hunter's early eye, the billows seem to roll. He turns his ear to the sound of each unequal ridge. But each is silent, gleaming, strewn with boughs and tufts of grass, which shake and whistle to the wind, over their grey seats of frost. So silent shone to the morning the ridges of Morven's host, as each warrior looked up from his helmet towards the hill of the king; the cloud-covered hill of Fingal, where he strode, in the folds of mist. At times is the hero seen, greatly dim in all his arms. From thought to thought rolled the war, along his mighty soul.

Now is the coming forth of the king. First appeared the sword of Luno; the spear half issuing from a cloud, the shield still dim in mist. But when the stride of the king came abroad, with all his grey, dewy locks in the wind; then rose the shouts of his host over every moving tribe. They gathered, gleaming, round, with all their echoing shields. So rise the

green seas round a spirit, that comes down from the squally wind. The traveller hears the sound afar, and lifts his head over the rock. He looks on the troubled bay, and thinks he dimly sees the form. The waves sport, unwieldy, round, with all their backs of foam.

Far-distant stood the son of Morni, Duthno's race, and Cona's bard. We stood far-distant; each beneath his tree. We shunned the eyes of the king: we had not conquered in the field. A little stream rolled at my feet; I touched its light wave, with my spear. I touched it with my spear; nor there was the soul of Ossian. It darkly rose, from thought to thought, and sent abroad the sigh.

"Son of Morni," said the king, "Dermid, hunter of roes! why are ye dark, like two rocks, each with its trickling waters? No wrath gathers on Fingal's soul, against the chiefs of men. Ye are my strength in battle; the kindling of my joy in peace. My early voice has been a pleasant gale to your ears, when Fillan prepared the bow. The son of Fingal is not here, nor yet the chase of the bounding roes. But why should the breakers of shields stand, darkened far away?"

Tall they strode towards the king; they saw him turned to Mora's wind. His tears came down, for his blue-eyed son, who slept in the cave of streams. But he brightened before them, and spoke to the broad-shielded kings.

"Crommal, with woody rocks, and misty top, the field of winds, pours forth, to the sight, blue Lubar's streamy roar. Behind it rolls clear-winding Lavath, in the still vale of deer. A cave is dark in a rock; above it strong-winged eagles dwell; broad-headed

oaks before it, sound in Cluna's wind. Within, in his locks of youth, is Ferad-artho *, blue-eyed king,

* Ferad-artho was the son of Cairbar Mac-Cormac, king of Ireland. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar, the son of Trenmor, the first Irish monarch, according to Ossian. In order to make this passage thoroughly understood, it may not be improper to recapitulate some part of what has been said in preceding notes. Upon the death of Conar the son of Trenmor, his son Cormac succeeded on the Irish throne. Cormac reigned long. His children were, Cairbar, who succeeded him, and Roscrana, the first wife of Fingal. Cairbar, long before the death of his father Cormac, had taken to wife Bos-gala, the daughter of Colgar, one of the most powerful chiefs in Connaught, and had, by her, Artho, afterwards king of Ireland. Soon after Artho arrived at man's estate, his mother Bos-gala died, and Cairbar married Beltanno, the daughter of Conachar of Ullin, who brought him a son, whom he called Ferad-artho, i. e. *a man in the place of Artho.* The occasion of the name was this: Artho, when his brother was born, was absent, on an expedition, in the south of Ireland. A false report was brought to his father, that he was killed. *Cairbar,* to use the words of a poem on the subject, *darkened for his fair-haired son. He turned to the young beam of light, the son of Baltanno of Conachar. Thou shalt be Ferad-artho, he said, a fire before thy race.* Cairbar, soon after, died, nor did Artho long survive him. Artho was succeeded, in the Irish throne, by his son Cormac, who, in his minority, was murdered by Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul. Ferad-artho, says tradition, was very young, when the expedition of Fingal, to settle him on the throne of Ireland, happened. During the short reign of young Cormac, Ferad-artho lived at the royal residence of Temora. Upon the murder of the king, Condan, the bard, conveyed Ferad-artho, privately, to the *cave of Cluna,* behind the mountain *Crommal* * in Ulster, where they both lived con-

* N. B. This should be Cromla—the caves of Cluna, in its face, are not the offspring of Fancy, but may still be visited by the Irish traveller, who may always procure guides at Belfast to conduct him round the cave hill to these caves. *C.*

the son of broad-shielded Cairbar, from Ullin of the roes. He listens to the voice of Condan, as, grey, he bends in feeble light. He listens, for his foes dwell in the echoing halls of Temora. He comes, at times, abroad, in the skirts of mist, to pierce the bounding roes. When the sun looks on the field, nor by the rock, nor stream, is he! He shuns the race of Bolga, who dwell in his father's hall. Tell him, that Fingal lifts the spear, and that his foes, perhaps, may fail."

"Lift up, O Gaul, the shield before him. Stretch, Dermid, Temora's spear. Be thy voice in his ear, O Carril, with the deeds of his fathers. Lead him to green Moi-lena, to the dusky field of ghosts; for there, I fall forward, in battle, in the folds of war. Before dun night descends, come to high Dunmora's top *. Look, from the grey skirts of mist, on Lena of the streams. If there my standard shall float on wind, over Lubar's gleaming stream, then has not Fingal failed in the last of his fields."

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cealed, during the usurpation of the family of Atha. A late bard has delivered the whole history, in a poem just now in my possession. It has little merit, if we except the scene between Ferad-artho, and the messengers of Fingal, upon their arrival, in the valley of Cluna. After hearing of the great actions of Fingal, the young prince proposes the following questions concerning him, to Gaul and Dermid: "Is the king tall as the rock of my cave? Is his spear a fir of Cluna? Is he a rough-winged blast, on the mountain, which takes the green oak by the head, and tears it from its hill? Glitters Lubar within his stride, when he sends his stately steps along?" "Nor is he tall," said Gaul, "as that rock: nor glitter streams within his strides; but his soul is a mighty flood, like the strength of Ullin's seas."

* *Vide* the geographical argument for my remarks on this highly valuable passage to my system of Celtic discoveries. *C.*

Such were his words; nor aught replied the silent, striding kings. They looked side-long, on Erin's host, and darkened, as they went. Never before had they left the king, in the midst of the stormy field. Behind them, touching at times his harp, the grey-haired Carril moved. He foresaw the fall of the people, and mournful was the sound! It was like a breeze that comes, by fits, over Lego's reedy lake; when sleep half-descends on the hunter, within his mossy cave.

"Why bends the bard of Cona," said Fingal, "over his secret stream? Is this a time for sorrow, father of low-laid Oscar? Be the warriors * remem-

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* Malvina is supposed to speak the following soliloquy:

"Malvina is like the bow of the shower, in the secret valley of streams; it is bright, but the drops of heaven are rolling on its blended light. They say, that I am fair within my locks, but, on my brightness, is the wandering of tears. Darkness flies over my soul, as the dusky wave of the breeze, along the grass of Lutha. Yet have not the roes failed me, when I moved between the hills. Pleasant, beneath my white hand, arose the sound of harps. What then, daughter of Lutha, travels over thy soul, like the dreary path of a ghost along the nightly beam? Should the young warrior fall, in the roar of his troubled fields! Young virgins of Lutha arise, call back the wandering thoughts of Malvina. Awake the voice of the harp, along my echoing vale. Then shall my soul come forth, like a light from the gates of the morn, when clouds are rolled around them, with their broken sides.

"Dweller of my thoughts, by night, whose form ascends in troubled fields, why dost thou stir up my soul, thou far distant son of the king? Is that the ship of my love, its dark course through the ridges of ocean? How art thou so sudden, Oscar, from the heath of shields?"

The rest of this poem consists of a dialogue between Ullin and Malvina, wherein the distress of the latter is carried to the highest pitch.

bered in peace; when echoing shields are heard no more. Bend, then, in grief, over the flood, where blows the mountain breeze. Let them pass on thy soul, the blue-eyed dwellers of the tomb. But Erin rolls to war; wide-tumbling, rough, and dark. Lift, Ossian, lift the shield. I am alone, my son!"

As comes the sudden voice of winds to the becalmed ship of Inis-huna, and drives it large, along the deep, dark rider of the wave; so the voice of Fingal sent Ossian, tall, along the heath. He lifted high his shining shield, in the dusky wing of war: like the broad, blank moon, in the skirt of a cloud, before the storms arise.

Loud, from moss-covered Mora* poured down, at once, the broad-winged war. Fingal led his people forth, king of Morven of streams. On high spreads the eagle's wing. His grey hair is poured on his shoulders broad. In thunder are his mighty strides. He often stood, and saw behind, the wide-gleaming rolling of armour. A rock he seemed, grey over with ice, whose woods are high in wind. Bright streams leap from its head, and spread their foam on blasts.

Now he came to Lubar's cave†, where Fillan darkly slept. Bran still lay on the broken shield: the eagle-wing is strewed by the winds. Bright, from withered furze, looked forth the hero's spear. Then grief stirred the soul of the king, like whirlwinds blackening on

* From this description the rest of the scenes are deducible—and the epithet, *moss-covered* Mora, is as strictly true as it is poetical. *C.*

† Caves are no scarcity in and about the source and course of the Lubar. *C.*

a lake. He turned his sudden step, and leaned on his bending spear.

White-breasted Bran came bounding with joy to the known path of Fingal. He came, and looked towards the cave, where the blue-eyed hunter lay, for he was wont to stride, with morning, to the dewy bed of the roe. It was then the tears of the king came down, and all his soul was dark. But as the rising wind rolls away the storm of rain, and leaves the white streams to the sun, and high hills with their heads of grass: so the returning war brightened the mind of Fingal. He bounded *, on his spear over Lubar†, and struck his

* The Irish compositions concerning Fingal invariably speak of him as a giant. Of these Hibernian poems there are now many in my hands. From the language and allusions to the times in which they were written, I should fix the date of their composition in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. In some passages, the poetry is far from wanting merit, but the fable is unnatural, and the whole conduct of the pieces injudicious. I shall give one instance of the extravagant fictions of the Irish bards, in a poem which they, most unjustly, ascribe to Ossian. The story of it is this: Ireland being threatened with an invasion from some part of Scandinavia, Fingal sent Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, to watch the bay, in which it was expected the enemy was to land. Oscar, unluckily, fell asleep, before the Scandinavians appeared; and, great as he was, says the Irish bard, he had one bad property, that no less could waken him, before his time, than cutting off one of his fingers, or throwing a great stone against his head; and it was dangerous to come near him on those occasions, till he had recovered himself, and was fully awake. Ca-olt, who was employed by Ossian to waken his son, made choice of throwing the stone against his head, as the least dangerous expedient. The stone, rebounding from the hero's head, shook, as it rolled along the hill, for three miles round. Oscar rose in rage, fought bravely, and, singly, van-

† This is yet practicable in some places! An Ulster peasant bounded over the Lubar on a pole in my presence. C.

echoing shield. His ridgy host bend forward, at once, with all their pointed steel.

Nor Erin heard, with fear, the sound; wide they came rolling along. Dark Malthos, in the wing of war, looks forward from shaggy brows. Next rose that beam of light Hidalla! then the side-long looking gloom of Maronnan. Blue-shielded Clonar lifts the spear; Cormar shakes his bushy locks on the wind. Slowly, from behind a rock, rose the bright form of Atha*. First appeared his two pointed spears, then the half of his burnished shield: like the rising of a nightly meteor, over the vale of ghosts. But when he shone all abroad: the hosts plunged, at once, into strife. The gleaming waves of steel are poured on either side.

As meet two troubled seas, with the rolling of all their waves, when they feel the wings of contending winds, in the rock-sided frith of Lumon; along the echoing hills is the dim course of ghosts; from the blast fall the torn groves on the deep, amidst the foamy path of whales. So mixed the host! Now Fingal; now Cathmor came abroad. The dark tumbling of death is before them: the gleam of broken steel is rolled on their steps, as, loud, the high-bounding kings hewed down the ridge of shields.

Maronnan fell, by Fingal, laid large across a stream. The waters gathered by his side, and leapt grey over his bossy shield. Clonar is pierced by Cathmor: nor

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quished a wing of the enemy's army. Thus the bard goes on, till Fingal put an end to the war, by the total rout of the Scandinavians. Puerile, and even despicable, as these fictions are, yet Keating and O'Flaherty have no better authority than the poems which contain them, for all that they write concerning Fion Maccomhal, and the pretended militia of Ireland. *C.*

* Cathmor—or O'Neill, King of Ulster. *C.*

yet lay the chief on earth. An oak seized his hair in his fall. His helmet rolled on the ground. By its thong, hung his broad shield; over it wandered his streaming blood. Tla-min * shall weep, in the hall, and strike her heaving breast.

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* Tla-min, *mildly soft*. The loves of Clonar and Tlamin were rendered famous in the north, by a fragment of a lyric poem. It is a dialogue between Clonar and Tlamin. She begins with a soliloquy which he overhears.

TLAMIN.

"Clonar, son of Conglas of I-mor, young hunter of dun-sided roes! where art thou laid, amidst rushes, beneath the passing wing of the breeze? I behold thee, my love, in the plain of thy own dark streams! The clung thorn is rolled by the wind, and rustles along his shield. Bright in his locks he lies: the thoughts of his dreams fly, darkening, over his face. Thou thinkest of the battles of Ossian, young son of the echoing isle!

"Half hid in the grove, I sit down. Fly back, ye mists of the hill. Why should ye hide her love from the blue eyes of Tlamin of harps?"

CLONAR.

"As the spirit, seen in a dream, flies off from our opening eyes, we think, we behold his bright path between the closing hills; so fled the daughter of Clungal, from the sight of Clonar of shields. Arise from the gathering of trees; blue-eyed Tlamin, arise."

TLAMIN.

"I turn me away from his steps. Why should he know of my love! My white breast is heaving over sighs, as foam on the dark course of streams. But he passes away, in his arms! Son of Conglas, my soul is sad."

CLONAR.

"It was the shield of Fingal! the voice of kings from Selma of harps! My path is towards green Erin. Arise, fair light, from thy shades. Come to the field of my soul, there is the spreading of hosts. Arise, on Clonar's troubled soul, young daughter of the blue-shielded Clungal."

Clungal was the chief of I-mor, one of the Hebrides.

Nor did Ossian forget the spear, in the wing of his war. He strewed the field with dead. Young Hidalla came. "Soft voice of streamy Clonar! Why dost thou lift the steel? O that we met in the strife of song, in thy own rushy vale!" Malthos beheld him low, and darkened as he rushed along. On either side of a stream, we bend in the echoing strife. Heaven comes rolling down: around burst the voices of squally winds. Hills are clothed, at times, in fire. Thunder rolls in wreaths of mist. In darkness shrunk the foe: Morven's warriors stood aghast. Still I bent over the stream, amidst my whistling locks.

Then rose the voice of Fingal, and the sound of the flying foe. I saw the king, at times, in lightning, darkly-striding in his might. I struck my echoing shield, and hung forward on the steps of Alnecma: the foe is rolled before me, like a wreath of smoke.

The sun looked forth from his cloud. The hundred streams of Moi-lena shone.* Slow rose the blue columns of mist, against the glittering hill. "Where are the mighty kings?† Nor by that stream, nor

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* Though a poetical number, if all were reckoned in and about Lena, I think this amount would not be far from the truth. *C.*

† Fingal and Cathmor. The conduct here is perhaps proper. The numerous descriptions of single combats have already exhausted the subject. Nothing new, nor adequate to our high idea of the kings, can be said. *A column of mist* is thrown over the whole, and the combat is left to the imagination of the reader. Poets have almost universally failed in their descriptions of this sort. Not all the strength of Homer could sustain, with dignity, the *minutiæ* of a single combat. The throwing of a spear, and the braying of a shield, as some of our own poets most elegantly express it, convey no magnificent, though they are striking ideas. Our imagination stretches beyond, and, consequently, despises,

wood are they! I hear the clang of arms! Their strife is in the bosom of that mist. Such is the contending of spirits in a nightly cloud, when they strive for the wintry wings of winds, and the rolling of the foam-covered waves.

I rushed along. The grey mist rose. Tall, gleaming, they stood at Lubar. Cathmor leaned against a rock. His half-fallen shield received the stream, that leapt from the moss above. Towards him is the stride of Fingal: he saw the hero's blood, His sword fell slowly to his side. He spoke, midst his darkening joy.

"Yields the race of Borbar-duthul? Or still does he lift the spear? Not unheard is thy name, at Atha, in the green dwelling of strangers. It has come, like the breeze of his desert, to the ear of Fingal. Come to my hill of feasts: the mighty fail, at times. No fire am I to low-laid foes: I rejoice not over the fall of the brave. To close * the wound is mine: I have known the herbs of the hills. I seized their fair heads,

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the description. It were, therefore, well for some poets, in my opinion, (though it is, perhaps, somewhat singular,) to have, sometimes, thrown *mist* over their single combats.

* Fingal is very much celebrated in tradition, for his knowledge in the virtues of herbs. The Irish poems, concerning him, often represent him curing the wounds which his chiefs received in battle. They fable concerning him, that he was in possession of a cup, containing the essence of herbs, which instantaneously healed wounds. The knowledge of curing the wounded, was, till of late, universal among the Highlanders. We hear of no other disorder, which required the skill of physic. The wholesomensss of the climate, and an active life, spent in hunting, excluded diseases.

on high, as they waved by their secret streams. Thou art dark and silent, king of Atha of strangers!"

"By Atha of the stream," he said, "there rises a mossy rock. On its head is the wandering of boughs, within the course of winds. Dark, in its face, is a cave, with its own loud rill. There have I heard the tread of strangers *, when they passed to my hall of shells. Joy rose, like a flame, on my soul: I blest the echoing rock. Here be my dwelling, in darkness; in my grassy vale. From this I shall mount the breeze, that pursues my thistle's beard; or look down, on blue-winding Atha, from its wandering mist †.

"Why speaks the king of the tomb? Ossian! the warrior has failed! Joy meet thy soul, like a stream, Cathmor, friend of strangers! My son, I hear the call of years; they take my spear as they pass along. Why does not Fingal, they seem to say, rest within his hall? Dost thou always delight in blood? In the

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* Cathmor reflects, with pleasure, even in his last moments, on the relief he had afforded to strangers. The very tread of their feet was pleasant in his ear. His hospitality was not passed unnoticed by the bards; for, with them, it became a proverb, when they described the hospitable disposition of a hero, *that he was like Cathmor of Atha, the friend of strangers.* It will seem strange, that, in all the Irish poems, there is no mention made of Cathmor. This must be attributed to the revolutions and domestic confusions which happened in that island, and utterly cut off all the real traditions concerning so ancient a period. All that we have related of the state of Ireland before the fifth century is of late invention, and the work of ill-informed senachies and injudicious bards.

† How beautifully descriptive is this passage of the scite of Shanes-castle—the seat of the noble family of O'Neill king of Ulster. *C.*

tears of the sad? No: ye dark-rolling years, Fingal delights not in blood. Tears are wintry streams that waste away my soul. But, when I lie down to rest, then comes the mighty voice of war. It awakes me, in my hall, and calls forth all my steel. It shall call it forth no more; Ossian, take thou thy father's spear. Lift it, in battle, when the proud arise.

"My fathers, Ossian, trace my steps; my deeds are pleasant to their eyes. Wherever I come forth to battle, on my field, are their columns of mist. But mine arm rescued the feeble; the haughty found my rage was fire. Never over the fallen did mine eye rejoice. For this *, my fathers shall meet me, at the gates of their airy halls, tall, with robes of light, with mildly-kindled eyes. But, to the proud in arms, they are darkened moons in heaven, which send the fire of night red-wandering over their face.

"Father of heroes, Trenmor, dweller of eddying winds! I give thy spear to Ossian, let thine eye rejoice. Thee have I seen, at times, bright from between thy clouds; so appear to my son, when he is to lift the spear: then shall he remember thy mighty deeds, though thou art now but a blast."

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* The Celtic nations had some idea of rewards, and perhaps of punishments, after death. Those who behaved, in life, with bravery and virtue, were received, with joy, to the airy halls of their fathers; but *the dark in soul*, to use the expression of the poet, were spurned away *from the habitation of heroes, to wander on all the winds*. Another opinion, which prevailed in those times, tended not a little to make individuals emulous to excel one another in martial achievements. It was thought, that, in the *hall of clouds*, every one had a seat, raised above others, in proportion as he excelled them, in valour, when he lived

He gave the spear to my hand, and raised, at once, a stone on high, to speak to future times, with its grey head of moss. Beneath he placed a sword * in earth, and one bright boss from his shield. Dark in thought, a while, he bends: his words, at length, came forth. "When thou, O stone, shalt moulder down, and lose thee, in the moss of years, then shall the traveller come, and whistling pass away. Thou know'st not, feeble man, that fame once shone on Moi-lena. Here Fingal resigned his spear, after the last of his fields. Pass away, thou empty shade! in thy voice there is no renown. Thou dwellest by some peaceful stream; yet a few years, and thou art gone. No one remembers thee, thou dweller of thick mist! But Fingal shall be clothed with fame, a beam of light to other times; for he went forth, in echoing steel, to save the weak in arms."

Brightening in his fame, the king strode to Lubar's sounding oak, where it bent, from its rock, over the bright-tumbling stream. Beneath it is a narrow plain, and the sound of the fount of the rock. Here the standard † of Morven poured its wreaths on the wind,

* There are some stones still to be seen in the north of Ireland, which were erected as memorials of some remarkable transactions between the ancient chiefs. There are generally found, beneath them, some piece of arms, and a bit of half-burnt wood. The cause of placing the last there is not mentioned in tradition.

† The erecting of his standard on the bank of Lubar, was the signal which Fingal, in the beginning of the book, promised to give to the chiefs, who went to conduct Ferad-artho to the army, should he himself prevail in battle. This standard here is called the *sun-beam.* The reason of this appellation, I gave in my notes on the poem intitled Fingal.

to mark the way of Ferad-artho, from his secret vale. Bright, from his parted west, the sun of heaven looked abroad. The hero saw his people, and heard their shouts of joy. In broken ridges round, they glittered to the beam. The king rejoiced, as a hunter in his own green vale, when, after the storm is rolled away, he sees the gleaming sides of the rocks. The green thorn shakes its head in their face; from their top look forward the roes.

Grey *, at his mossy cave, is bent the aged form of Clonmal. The eyes of the bard had failed. He leaned forward, on his staff. Bright in her locks, before him, Sul-malla listened to the tale; the tale of the kings of Atha, in the days of old. The noise of battle had ceased in his ear: he stopt, and raised the secret sigh. The spirits of the dead, they said, often lightened along his soul. He saw the king of Atha low, beneath his bending tree.

"Why art thou dark?" said the maid. "The strife of arms is past. Soon † shall he come to thy cave, over thy winding streams. The sun looks from the rocks of the west. The mists of the lake arise. Grey, they spread on that hill, the rushy dwelling of roes. From the mist shall my king appear! Behold, he comes in his arms. Come to the cave of Clonmal, O my best beloved!"

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* The scene is changed to the valley of Lona, whither Sul-malla had been sent, by Cathmor, before the battle. Clonmal, an aged bard, or rather druid, as he seems here to be endued with a prescience of events, had long dwelt there in a cave. This scene is calculated to throw a melancholy gloom over the mind.

† Cathmor had promised, in the seventh book, to come to the cave of Clonmal, after the battle was over.

It was the spirit of Cathmor, stalking, large, a gleaming form. He sunk by the hollow stream, that roared between the hills. "It was but the hunter," she said, "who searches for the bed of the roe. His steps are not forth to war; his spouse expects him with night. He shall, whistling, return with the spoils of the dark-brown hinds." Her eyes were turned to the hill; again the stately form came down. She rose in the midst of joy. He retired again in mist. Gradual vanish his limbs of smoke, and mix with the mountain-wind. Then she knew that he fell! "King of Erin, art thou low!" Let Ossian forget her grief; it wastes the soul of age.*

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* Tradition relates, that Ossian, the next day after the decisive battle between Fingal and Cathmor, went to find out Sul-malla, in the valley of Lona. His address to her follows:

"Awake, thou daughter of Conmor, from the fern-skirted cavern of Lona. Awake, thou sun-beam in deserts; warriors one day must fail. They move forth, like terrible lights; but, often, their cloud is near. Go to the valley of streams, to the wandering of herds, on Lumon; there dwells, in his lazy mist, the man of many days. But he is unknown, Sul-malla, like the thistle of the rocks of roes; it shakes its grey beard, in the wind, and falls, unseen of our eyes. Not such are the kings of men, their departure is a meteor of fire, which pours its red course from the desert, over the bosom of night. The fern-skirted cavern of Lona is true and poetical. *C.*

"He is mixed with the warriors of old, those sires that have hid their heads. At times shall they come forth in song. Not forgot has the warrior failed. He has not seen, Sul-malla, the fall of a beam of his own: no fair-haired son, in his blood, young troubler of the field. I am lonely, young branch of Lumon, I may hear the voice of the feeble, when my strength shall have failed in years, for young Oscar has ceased, on his field."——

Sul-malla returned to her own country. She makes a considerable figure in another poem; her behaviour in that piece accounts

Evening came down on Moi-lena. Grey rolled the streams of the land. Loud came forth the voice of Fingal: the beam of oaks arose. The people gathered round with gladness, with gladness blended with shades. They sidelong looked to the king, and beheld his unfinished joy. Pleasant, from the way of the desert, the voice of music came. It seemed, at first, the noise of a stream, far distant on its rocks. Slow it rolled along the hill, like the ruffled wing of a breeze, when it takes the tufted beard of the rocks, in the still season of night. It was the voice of Condan, mixed with Carril's trembling harp. They came, with blue-eyed Ferad-artho, to Mora of the streams.

Sudden bursts the song from our bards, on Lena: the host struck their shields midst the sound. Gladness rose brightening on the king, like the beam of a cloudy day, when it rises, on the green hill, before the roar of winds. He struck the bossy shield of kings; at once they cease around. The people lean forward, from their spears, towards the voice of their land.*

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for that partial regard with which the poet ought to speak of her throughout Temora.

* Before I finish my notes, it may not be altogether improper to obviate an objection, which may be made to the credibility of the story of Temora. It may be asked, whether it is probable, that Fingal could perform such actions as are ascribed to him in this book, at an age when his grandson, Oscar, had acquired so much reputation in arms. To this it may be answered, that Fingal was but very young [book 4th] when he took to wife Roscrana, who soon after became the mother of Ossian. Ossian was also extremely young when he married Ever-allin, the mother of Oscar. Tradition relates, that Fingal was but eighteen years old at the birth of his son Ossian; and that Ossian was much about the same age, when Oscar, his son, was born. Oscar, perhaps,

"Sons of Morven, spread the feast; send the night away in song. Ye have shone around me, and the dark storm is past. My people are the windy rocks, from which I spread my eagle-wings, when I rush forth to renown, and seize it on its field. Ossian, thou hast the spear of Fingal: it is not the staff of a boy with which he strews the thistle round, young wanderer of the field. No: it is the lance of the mighty, with which they stretched forth their hands to death. Look to thy fathers, my son; they are awful beams. With morning lead Ferad-artho forth to the echoing halls of Temora. Remind him of the kings of Erin; the stately forms of old. Let not the fallen be forgot, they were mighty in the field. Let Carril pour his song, that the kings may rejoice in their mist. To-morrow I spread my sails to Sefma's shaded walls; where streamy Duthula winds through the seats of roes."

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might be about twenty, when he was killed, in the battle of Gabhra [book 1st]; so the age of Fingal, when the decisive battle was fought between him and Cathmor, was just fifty-six years. In those times of activity and health, the natural strength and vigour of a man was little abated at such an age; so that there is nothing improbable in the actions of Fingal, as related in this book. *M.*—But the chronology of the Irish bards is wrong: a battle at the pass of Goura, a valley in the chain of Cromla, should be placed in A. D. 388, instead of 288. *C.*

CONLATH AND CUTHÓNA:

A

Poem.

ARGUMENT.

Conlath was the youngest of Morni's sons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul. He was in love with Cuthóna the daughter of Rumar, when Toscar the son of Kinfena, accompanied by Ferculh his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora, where Conlath dwelt. He was hospitably received, and, according to the custom of the times, feasted three days with Conlath. On the fourth he set sail, and coasting the *island of waves*, one of the Hebrides, he saw Cuthóna hunting, fell in love with her and carried her away, by force, in his ship. He was forced, by stress of weather, into I-thona, a desert isle. In the mean time Conlath, hearing of the rape, sailed after him, and found him on the point of sailing for the coast of Ireland. They fought; and they and their followers fell by mutual wounds. Cuthona did not long survive: for she died of grief the third day after. Fingal, hearing of their unfortunate death, sent Stormal the son of Moran to bury them, but forgot to send a bard to sing the funeral song over their tombs. The ghost of Conlath comes, long after, to Ossian, to intreat him to transmit to posterity, his and Cuthona's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the souls of the deceased were not happy, till their elegies were composed by a bard.

CONLATH AND CUTHÓNA:

A

Poem.

DID not Ossian hear a voice? or is it the sound of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening sun, on my soul. The noise of the chase is renewed. In thought I lift the spear. But Ossian did hear a voice! Who art thou, son of night? The children of the feeble are asleep. The midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the shield of Fingal that echoes to the blast. It hangs in Ossian's hall. He feels it sometimes with his hands. Yes! I hear thee, my friend! Long has thy voice been absent from mine ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Ossian, son of generous Morni? Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oscar, son of fame? He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the sound of Battle arose.

GHOST OF CONLATH.

Sleeps the sweet voice of Cona, in the midst of his rustling hall? Sleeps Ossian in his hall, and his friends without their fame? The sea rolls round dark I-thona*.

* I-thonn, *island of waves*, one of the uninhabited western isles.

Our tombs are not seen in our isle. How long shall our fame be unheard, son of resounding Selma?

OSSIAN.

O that mine eyes could behold thee! Thou sittest, dim on thy cloud! Art thou like the mist of Lano? An half-extinguished meteor of fire? Of what are the skirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow? He is gone on his blast like the shade of a wandering cloud. Come from thy wall, O harp! Let me hear thy sound. Let the light of memory rise on I-thona. Let me behold again my friends! And Ossian does behold his friends on the dark-blue isle. The cave of Thona appears, with its mossy rocks and bending tree. A stream roars at its mouth. Toscar bends over its course. Fercuth is sad by his side. Cuthona* sits at a distance and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive? Or do I hear them speak?

TOSCAR.

The night was stormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The sea darkly-tumbled beneath the blast. The roaring waves climbed against our rocks. The lightning came often and shewed the blasted fern. Fercuth! I saw the ghost who embroiled the night†. Silent he stood, on that bank. His robe of mist flew

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* Cuthóna, the daughter of Rumar, whom Toscar had carried away by force.

† It was long thought, in the north of Scotland, that storms were raised by the ghosts of the deceased. This notion is still entertained by the vulgar; for they think that whirlwinds, and sudden squalls of wind, are occasioned by spirits, who transport themselves, in that manner, from one place to another

on the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man he seemed, and full of thought!

FERCUTH.

It was thy father, O Toscar. He foresees some death among his race. Such was his appearance on Cromla, before the great Ma-ronnan* fell. Erin of hills of grass! how pleasant are thy vales? Silence is near thy blue streams. The sun is on thy fields. Soft is the sound of the harp in Selama †. Lovely the cry of the hunter on Cromla. But we are in dark I-thona, surrounded by the storm. The billows lift their white heads above the rocks. We tremble amidst the night.

TOSCAR.

Whither is the soul of battle fled, Fercuth with locks of age? I have seen thee undaunted in danger: thine eyes burning with joy in the fight. Whither is the soul of battle fled? Our fathers never feared. Go: view the settling sea: the stormy wind is laid. The billows still tremble on the deep. They seem to fear the blast. Go, view the settling sea. Morning is grey on our rocks. The sun will look soon from his east; in all his pride of light! I lifted up my sails, with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath. My course was by a desert isle: Where Cuthóna pursued the deer. I saw her, like that beam of the sun that issues from the cloud.

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* Ma-ronnan was the brother of Toscar.

† Selámath, *beautiful to behold*, the name of Toscar's residence, on the coast of Ulster, *near* the *mountain Crómla*. *M.*—Here Macpherson contradicts himself again in favour of my discoveries. *Vide* the map, *C.*

Her hair was on her heaving breast. She, bending forward, drew the bow. Her white arm seemed, behind her, like the snow of Crómla. Come to my soul, I said, huntress of the desert isle! But she wastes her time in tears. She thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthóna, lovely maid.

CUTHONA *.

A distant steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks. The billow rolls at its feet. On its side is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Mora †. There the towers of my love arise. There Conlath looks over the sea for his only love. The daughters of the chase returned. He beheld their downcast eyes. "Where is the daughter of Rumar?" But they answered not. My peace dwells on Mora, son of the distant land!

TOSCAR.

Cuthóna shall return to her peace: to the towers of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toscar! I have feasted in his halls! Rise, ye gentle breezes of Erin. Stretch my sails toward Mora's shores. Cuthóna shall rest on Mora: but the days of Toscar must be sad. I shall sit in my cave in the field of the sun. The blast will rustle in my trees. I shall think it is Cuthóna's voice. But she is distant far, in the halls of the mighty Conlath!

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* Cu-thóna, *the mournful sound of the waves;* a poetical name given her on account of her mourning to the sound of the waves; her name in tradition is Gorm-huil, *the blue-eyed maid.*

† This Mora cannot be the one near Connor. *C.*

CUTHONA.

Ha! what cloud is that? It carries the ghosts of my fathers. I see the skirts of their robes, like grey and watery mist. When shall I fall, O Rumar? Sad Cuthóna foresees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow house? *

OSSIAN.

He shall behold thee, O maid! He comes along the heaving sea. The death of Toscar is dark on his spear. A wound is in his side! He is pale at the cave of Thona. He shews his ghastly wound. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthóna? The chief of Mora dies. The vision grows dim on my mind. I behold the chiefs no more! But, O ye bards of future times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears. He fell before his day. Sadness darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his shield on the wall, and it was bloody †. She knew that her hero fell. Her sorrow was heard on Mora. Art thou pale on thy rock, Cuthóna, beside the fallen chiefs? Night comes, and day returns, but none appears to raise their tomb. Thou frightenest the screaming fowls away. Thy tears for ever flow. Thou art pale as a watery cloud, that rises from a lake!

The sons of green Selma came. They found Cuthóna cold. They raised a tomb over the heroes. She rests at the side of Conlath! Come not to my dreams,

* The grave.

† It was the opinion of the times, that the arms left by the heroes at home, became bloody the very instant their owners were killed, though at ever so great a distance.

O Conlath! Thou hast received thy fame. Be thy voice far distant from my hall; that sleep may descend at night. O that I could forget my friends: till my footsteps should cease to be seen! till I come among them with joy! and lay my aged limbs in the narrow house!

BERRATHON:

A

Poem.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal in his voyage to Lochlin, whither he had been invited by Starno, the father of Agandecca, touched at Berrathon, an island of Scandinavia, where he was kindly entertained by Larthmor, the petty king of the place, who was a vassal of the supreme kings of Lochlin. The hospitality of Larthmor gained him Fingal's friendship, which that hero manifested, after the imprisonment of Larthmor by his own son, by sending Ossian and Toscar, the father of Malvina, so often mentioned, to rescue Larthmor, and to punish the unnatural behaviour of Uthal. Uthal was handsome, and, by the ladies, much admired. Nina-thoma, the beautiful daughter of Torthóma, a neighbouring prince, fell in love and fled with him. He proved unconstant! for another lady, whose name is not mentioned, gaining his affections, he confined Nina-thoma to a desert island near the coast of Berrathon. She was relieved by Ossian, who, in company with Toscar, landing on Berrathon, defeated the forces of Uthal, and killed him in a single combat. Nina-thoma, whose love not all the bad behaviour of Uthal could erase, hearing of his death, died of grief. In the mean time Larthmor is restored, and Ossian and Toscar return in triumph to Fingal.

The poem opens with an elegy on the death of Malvina the daughter of Toscar, and closes with presages of Ossian's death.

BERRATHON:

A

Poem.

BEND thy blue course, O stream! round the narrow plain of Lutha *. Let the green woods hang over it, from their hills: the sun look on it at noon. The thistle is there on its rock, and shakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head, waving, at times, to the gale. "Why dost thou awake me, O gale!" it seems to say, "I am covered with the drops of heaven! The time of my fading is near, the blast that shall scatter my leaves. To-morrow shall the traveller come; he that saw me in my beauty shall come. His eyes will search the field, but they will not find me." So shall they search in vain, for the voice of Cona, after it has failed in the field. The hunter shall come forth in the morning, and the voice of my harp shall not be heard. "Where is the son of car-borne Fingal?" The tear will be on his cheek! Then come thou, O Malvina; with all thy music come! Lay Ossian in the plain of Lutha: let his tomb rise in the lovely field.

* Lutha, *swift stream.*

Malvina! where art thou, with thy songs, with the soft sound of thy steps? Son * of Alpin, art thou near? where is the daughter of Toscar? "I passed, O son of Fingal, by Tor-lutha's mossy walls. The smoke of the hall was ceased. Silence was among the trees of the hill. The voice of the chase was over. I saw the daughters of the bow. I asked about Malvina, but they answered not. They turned their faces away: thin darkness covered their beauty. They were like stars, on a rainy hill, by night, each looking faintly through her mist."

Pleasant † be thy rest, O lovely beam! soon hast thou set on our hills! The steps of thy departure were stately, like the moon on the blue, trembling wave. But thou hast left us in darkness, first of the maids of Lutha! We sit, at the rock, and there is no voice; no light but the meteor of fire! Soon hast thou set, O Malvina, daughter of generous Toscar! But thou risest like the beam of the east, among the spirits of thy friends, where they sit, in their stormy halls, the chambers of the thunder! A cloud hovers over Cona. Its blue curling sides are high. The winds are beneath it, with their wings. Within it is the dwelling ‡ of Fingal. There the hero sits in dark-

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* His father was one of Fingal's principal bards, and he had a poetical genius.

† Ossian speaks. He calls Malvina a beam of light, and continues the metaphor throughout the paragraph.

‡ The description of this ideal palace of Fingal is agreeable to the notions of those times, concerning the state of the deceased, who were supposed to pursue, after death, the pleasures and employments of their former life. The situation of the Celtic heroes, in their separate state, if not entirely happy, is more

ness. His airy spear is in his hand. His shield, half-covered with clouds, is like the darkened moon; when one half still remains in the wave, and the other looks sickly on the field!

His friends sit around the king, on mist! They hear the songs of Ullin: he strikes the half-viewless harp. He raises the feeble voice. The lesser heroes, with a thousand meteors, light the airy hall. Malvina rises in the midst; a blush is on her cheek. She beholds the unknown faces of her fathers. She turns aside her humid eyes. "Art thou come so soon," said Fingal, "daughter of generous Toscar? Sadness dwells in the halls of Lutha. My aged son * is sad! I hear the breeze of Cona, that was wont to lift thy heavy locks. It comes to the hall, but thou art not there. Its voice is mournful among the arms of thy fathers! Go, with thy rustling wing, O breeze! sigh on Malvina's tomb. It rises yonder beneath the rock, at the blue stream of Lutha. The maids † are departed to their place. Thou alone, O breeze, mournest there!"

But who comes from the dusky west, supported on a cloud? A smile is on his grey, watery face. His locks of mist fly on wind. He bends forward on his airy spear. It is thy father, Malvina! "Why shinest thou, so soon, on our clouds," he says, "O lovely light of Lutha! But thou wert sad, my daughter. Thy

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agreeable than the notions of the ancient Greeks concerning their departed heroes.

* Ossian; who had a great friendship for Malvina, both on account of her love for his son Oscar, and her attention to himself.

† That is, the young virgins who sung the funeral elegy over her tomb.

friends had passed away. The sons of little men * were in the hall. None remained of the heroes, but Ossian king of spears!"

And dost thou remember Ossian, car-borne Toscar,† son of Conloch? The battles of our youth were many. Our swords went together to the field. They saw us coming like two falling rocks. The sons of the stranger fled. "There come the warriors of Cona!" they said. "Their steps are in the paths of the flying!" Draw near, son of Alpin, to the song of the aged. The deeds of other times are in my soul. My memory beams on the days that are past: on the days of mighty Toscar, when our path was in the deep. Draw near, son of Alpin, to the last sound of the voice of Cona!

The king of Morven commanded. I raised my sails to the wind. Toscar chief of Lutha stood at my side, I rose on the dark-blue wave. Our course was to sea-surrounded Berrathon ‡, the isle of many storms. There dwelt, with his locks of age, the stately strength of Lathmor; Lathmor, who spread the feast of shells to Fingal, when he went to Starno's halls, in the days of Agandecca. But when the chief was old, the pride of his son arose; the pride of fair-haired Uthal, the love of a thousand maids. He bound the aged Lathmor, and dwelt in his sounding halls!

* Tradition is entirely silent concerning what passed in the north immediately after the death of Fingal and all his heroes; by which it would seem that the actions of their successors were not to be compared to those of the renowned Fingalians.

† Toscar was the son of that Conloch, who was also father to the lady, whose unfortunate death is related in the last episode of the second book of Fingal.

‡ Berrathon, *a promontory in the midst of waves.*

Long pined the king in his cave, beside his rolling sea. Day did not come to his dwelling; nor the burning oak by night. But the wind of ocean was there, and the parting beam of the moon. The red star looked on the king, when it trembled on the western wave. Snitho came to Selma's hall: Snitho the friend of Lathmor's youth. He told of the king of Berrathon: the wrath of Fingal arose. Thrice he assumed the spear, resolved to stretch his hand to Uthal. But the memory * of his deeds rose before the king. He sent his son and Toscar. Our joy was great on the rolling sea. We often half-unsheathed our swords. For never before had we fought alone, in battles of the spear.

Night came down on the ocean. The winds departed on their wings. Cold and pale is the moon. The red stars lift their heads on high. Our coast is slow along the coast of Berrathon. The white waves tumble on the rocks. "What voice is that," said Toscar, "which comes between the sounds of the waves? It is soft but mournful, like the voice of departed bards. But I behold a maid.† She sits on the rock alone. Her head bends on her arm of snow. Her dark hair is in the wind. Hear, son of Fingal, her song, it is smooth as the gliding stream." We came to the silent bay, and heard the maid of night.

"How long will ye roll around me, blue-tumbling

* The meaning is, that Fingal remembered his own great actions, and consequently would not sully them by engaging in a petty war against Uthal, who was so far his inferior in valour and power.

† Nina-thoma, the daughter of Torthóma, who had been confined to a desert island by her lover Uthal.

waters of ocean? My dwelling was not always in caves, nor beneath the whistling tree. The feast was spread in Torthóma's hall. My father delighted in my voice. The youths beheld me in the steps of my loveliness. They blessed the dark-haired Nina-thoma. It was then thou didst come, O Uthal! like the sun of heaven! The souls of the virgins are thine, son of generous Larthmor! But why dost thou leave me alone, in the midst of roaring waters? Was my soul dark with thy death? Did my white hand lift the sword? Why then hast thou left me alone, king of Finthormo.*

The tear started from my eye, when I heard the voice of the maid. I stood before her in my arms. I spoke the words of peace! "Lovely dweller of the cave! what sigh is in thy breast? Shall Ossian lift his sword in thy presence, the destruction of thy foes? Daughter of Torthóma, rise. I have heard the words of thy grief. The race of Morven are around thee, who never injured the weak. Come to our dark-bosomed ship! thou brighter than that setting moon! Our course is to the rocky Berrathon, to the echoing walls of Finthormo." She came in her beauty; she came with all her lovely steps. Silent joy brightened in her face; as when the shadows fly from the field of spring; the blue-stream is rolling in brightness, and the green bush bends over its course!

The morning rose with its beams. We came to Rothma's bay. A boar rushed from the wood: my spear pierced his side, and he fell. I rejoiced over the

* Finthormo, the palace of Uthal. The names in this episode are not of a Celtic original. *M.*—I know to the contrary. *C.*

blood *. I foresaw my growing fame. But now the sound of Uthal's train came, from the high Finthormo. They spread over the heath to the chase of the boar. Himself comes slowly on, in the pride of his strength. He lifts two pointed spears. On his side is the hero's sword. Three youths carry his polished bows. The bounding of five dogs is before him. His heroes move on, at a distance, admiring the steps of the king. Stately was the son of Larthmor! but his soul was dark! Dark as the troubled face of the moon, when it foretels the storms!

We rose on the heath before the king. He stopt in the midst of his course. His heroes gathered around A grey-haired bard advanced. "Whence are the sons of the strangers!" began the bard of song. "The children of the unhappy come to Berrathon; to the sword of car-borne Uthal. He spreads no feast in his hall. The blood of strangers is on his streams. If from Selma's walls ye come, from the mossy walls of Fingal, chuse three youths to go to your king to tell of the fall of his people. Perhaps the hero may come and pour his blood on Uthal's sword. So shall the fame of Finthormo arise, like the growing tree of the vale!"

"Never will it rise, O bard," I said in the pride of my wrath. "He would shrink from the presence of Fingal, whose eyes are the flames of death. The son of Comhal comes, and kings vanish before him. They are rolled together, like mist, by the breath of his rage.

* Ossian might have thought that his killing a boar on his first landing in Berrathon, was a good omen of his future success in that island. The present Highlanders look, with a degree of superstition, upon the success of their first action, after they have engaged in any desperate uudertaking.

Shall they tell to Fingal, that his people fell? Yes! they may tell it, bard! but his people shall fall with fame!"

I stood in the darkness of my strength. Toscar drew his sword at my side. The foe came on like a stream. The mingled sound of death arose. Man took man; shield met shield; steel mixed its beams with steel. Darts hiss through the air. Spears ring on mails. Swords on broken bucklers bound. As the noise of an aged grove beneath the roaring wind, when a thousand ghosts break the trees by night, such was the din of arms! But Uthal fell beneath my sword. The sons of Berrathon fled. It was then I saw him in his beauty, and the tear hung in my eye! "Thou art fallen *, young tree," I said, "with all thy beauty round thee. Thou art fallen on thy plains, and the field is bare. The winds come from the desert! there is no sound in thy leaves! Lovely art thou in death, son of car-borne Larthmor."

Nina-thoma sat on the shore. She heard the sound of battle. She turned her red eyes on Lethmal, the grey-haired bard of Selma. He alone had remained on the coast, with the daughter of Torthóma. "Son of the times of old!" she said, "I hear the noise of death. Thy friends have met with Uthal, and the chief is low!

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* To mourn over the fall of their enemies, was a practice universal among the Celtic heroes. This is more agreeable to humanity than the shameful insulting of the dead, so common in Homer, and after him, servilely copied by all his imitators, (the humane Virgil not excepted,) who have been more successful in borrowing the imperfections of that great poet, than in their imitations of his beauties. *M.*—This is applicable to many writers of our own days. How many basely copy, or attempt to imitate Byron! *C.*

O that I had remained on the rock, inclosed with the tumbling waves? Then would my soul be sad, but his death would not reach my ear. Art thou fallen on thy heath, O son of high Finthormo! Thou didst leave me on a rock, but my soul was full of thee. Son of high Finthormo! art thou fallen on thy heath?"

She rose pale in her tears. She saw the bloody shield of Uthal! She saw it in Ossian's hand. Her steps were distracted on the heath. She flew. She found him. She fell. Her soul came forth in a sigh. Her hair is spread on his face. My bursting tears descend. A tomb arose on the unhappy. My song of woe was heard. "Rest, hapless children of youth! Rest at the noise of that mossy stream! The virgins will see your tomb, at the chase, and turn away their weeping eyes. Your fame will be in song. The voice of the harp will be heard in your praise. The daughters of Selma shall hear it! your renown shall be in other lands. Rest, children of youth, at the noise of the mossy stream!"

Two days we remained on the coast. The heroes of Berrathon convened. We brought Larthmor to his halls. The feast of shells is spread. The joy of the aged was great. He looked to the arms of his fathers. The arms which he left in his hall, when the pride of Uthal rose. We were renowned before Larthmor. He blessed the chiefs of Morven. He knew not that his son was low, the stately strength of Uthal! They had told, that he had retired to the woods, with the tears of grief. They had told it, but he was silent in the tomb of Rothma's heath.

On the fourth day we raised our sails, to the roar of the northern wind. Larthmor came to the coast. His

bards exalted the song. The joy of the king was great, he looked to Rothma's gloomy heath. He saw the tomb of his son. The memory of Uthal rose. "Who of my heroes," he said, "lies there? he seems to have been of the kings of men. Was he renowned in my halls before the pride of Uthal rose?" Ye are silent, sons of Berrathon! is the king of heroes low! My heart melts for thee, O Uthal! though thy hand was against thy father. O that I had remained in the cave! that my son had dwelt in Finthormo! I might have heard the tread of his feet, when he went to the chase of the boar. I might have heard his voice on the blast of my cave. Then would my soul be glad; but now darkness dwells in my halls."

Such were my deeds, son of Alpin, when the arm of my youth was strong. Such the * actions of Toscar, the car-borne son of Conloch. But Toscar is on his flying cloud. I am alone at Lutha. My voice is like the last sound of the wind, when it forsakes the woods. But Ossian shall not be long alone. He sees the mist that shall receive his ghost. He beholds the mist that shall form his robe, when he appears on his hills. The sons of feeble men shall behold me, and admire the stature of the chiefs of old. They shall creep to their caves. They shall look to the sky with fear; for my steps shall be in the clouds. Darkness shall roll on my side.

Lead, son of Alpin, lead the aged to his woods. The winds begin to rise. The dark wave of the lake resounds. Bends there not a tree from Mora with its

* Ossian speaks.

branches bare? It bends, son of Alpin, in the rustling blast. My harp hangs on a blasted branch. The sound of its strings is mournful. Does the wind touch thee, O harp, or is it some passing ghost! It is the hand of Malvina! Bring me the harp, son of Alpin. Another song shall rise. My soul shall depart in the sound. My fathers shall hear it in their airy hall. Their dim faces shall hang, with joy, from their clouds; and their hands receive their son. The aged oak bends over the stream. It sighs with all its moss. The withered fern whistles near, and mixes, as it waves, with Ossian's hair.

" Strike the harp, and raise the song: be near, with all your wings, ye winds. Bear the mournful sound away to Fingal's airy hall. Bear it to Fingal's hall, that he may hear the voice of his son. The voice of him that praised the mighty!

" The blast of the north opens thy gates, O king! I behold thee sitting on mist, dimly gleaming in all thine arms. Thy form now is not the terror of the valiant. It is like a watery cloud; when we see the stars behind it, with their weeping eyes. Thy shield is the aged moon: thy sword a vapour half-kindled with fire. Dim and feeble is the chief, who travelled in brightness before! But thy steps * are on the winds of the

* This description of the power of Fingal over the winds and storms, and the image of his taking the sun, and hiding him in the clouds, do not correspond with the preceding paragraph, where he is represented as a feeble ghost, and no more the TERROR OF THE VALIANT; but it agrees with the notion of the times concerning the souls of the deceased, who, it was supposed, had the command of the winds and storms, but took no concern in the affairs of men.

desert. The storms are darkening in thy hand. Thou takest the sun in thy wrath, and hidest him in thy clouds. The sons of little men are afraid. A thousand showers descend. But when thou comest forth in thy mildness; the gale of the morning is near thy course. The sun laughs in his blue fields. The grey stream winds in its vale. The bushes shake their green heads in the wind. The roes bound towards the desert."

"There is a murmur in the heath! the stormy winds abate! I hear the voice of Fingal. Long has it been absent from mine ear! "Come, Ossian, come away," he says. Fingal has received his fame. We passed away, like flames that had shone for a season. Our departure was in renown. Though the plains of our battles are dark and silent; our fame is in the four grey stones. The voice of Ossian has been heard. The harp has been strung in Selma. "Come, Ossian, come away," he says, "come, fly with thy fathers on clouds." I come, I come, thou king of men! The life of Ossian fails. I begin to vanish on Cona. My steps are not seen in Selma. Beside the stone of Mora I shall fall asleep. The winds whistling in my grey hair, shall not awaken me. Depart on thy wings, O wind! thou canst not disturb the rest of the bard. The night is long, but his eyes are heavy. Depart, thou rustling blast."

"But why art thou sad, son of Fingal? Why grows the cloud of thy soul? The chiefs of other times are departed. They have gone without their fame. The sons of future years shall pass away. Another race shall arise. The people are like the waves of ocean: like the leaves of woody Morven,

they pass away in the rustling blast, and other leaves lift their green heads on high."

Did thy beauty last, O Ryno *? Stood the strength

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* Ryno, the son of Fingal, who was killed in Ireland, in the war against Swaran, was remarkable for the beauty of his person, his swiftness, and great exploits. Minvâne, the daughter of Morni, and sister to Gaul, was in love with Ryno. Her lamentation over her lover follows:

She blushing sad, from Morven's rocks, bends over the darkly-rolling sea. She sees the youth in all their arms. Where, Ryno, where art thou?

Our dark looks told that he was low! That pale the hero flew on clouds! That in the grass of Morven's hills his feeble voice was heard in wind!

And is the son of Fingal fallen on Ullin's mossy plains? Strong was the arm that vanquished him! Ah me! I am alone!

Alone I shall not be, ye winds! that lift my dark-brown hair. My sighs shall not long mix with your stream; for I must sleep with Ryno.

I see thee not, with beauty's steps, returning from the chase. The night is round Minvâne's love. Dark silence dwells with Ryno.

Where are thy dogs, and where thy bow? Thy shield that was so strong? Thy sword like heaven's descending fire? The bloody spear of Ryno?

I see them mixed in thy deep ship; I see them stained with blood. No arms are in thy narrow hall, O darkly-dwelling Ryno!

When will the morning come, and say, "Arise, thou king of spears! arise, the hunters are abroad. The hinds are near thee, Ryno!"

Away, thou fair-haired morning, away! the slumbering king hears thee not! The hinds bound over his narrow tomb; for death dwells round young Ryno.

But I will tread softly, my king! and steal to the bed of thy repose. Minvâne will lie in silence, nor disturb the slumbering Ryno.

of Car-borne Oscar? Fingal himself departed. The halls of his fathers forgot his steps. Shalt thou then remain, thou aged bard! when the mighty have failed? But my fame shall remain, and grow like the oak of Morven; which lifts its broad head to the storm, and rejoices in the course of the wind *!

The maids shall seek me: but they shall not find me: they *shall follow my departure with songs. But I shall not hear you,* O maids! I sleep with fair-haired Ryno.

* Having gone through the poems of Ossian, with all the patience of a sincere friend of the poet; and, without boasting I may add, expended as much time in attempting to do him justice as any of his admirers, I deem it incumbent upon me to declare, *that had it not been for the authority of Buchanan, I should* have doubted all that Macpherson has said about Fingal having lived at so remote a period as the 4th or 5th century, and I would have placed him in the 8th century when navigation begun to be more general between the Norse, Danes, &c. and our early islanders. The disinterested Buchanan, however, is indisputable evidence against my opinion; and I acknowledge myself a convert and a friend upon this ground, and upon that of the very striking coincidence between the Celtic and Irish traditions respecting the heroes, and occurrences, of the time of Ossian. *C.*

A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING THE

ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but, at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain. The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity. The arts of polished life, by which alone facts can be preserved with certainty, are the production of a well-formed community. It is then historians begin to write, and public transactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obscurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find so much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; posterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their ancestors.

The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakness. They swallowed the most absurd fables

concerning the high antiquities of their respective nations. Good historians, however, arose very early amongst them, and transmitted, with lustre, their great actions to posterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or lost in obscurity. The Celtic nations afford a striking instance of this kind. They, though once the masters of Europe from the mouth of the river Oby *, in Russia, to Cape Finisterre, the western point of Gallicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in history. They trusted their fame to tradition and the songs of their bards, which, by the vicissitude of human affairs, are long since lost. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them; and the traces of it being found in places so widely distant from each other, serves only to shew the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their history.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which possessed old Gaul is the most renowned; not perhaps on account of worth superior to the rest, but for their wars with a people who had historians to transmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to posterity. Britain was first peopled by them, according to the testimony of the best authors †; its situation in respect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all dispute, is, that the same customs and language prevailed among the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæsar ‡.

The colony from Gaul possessed themselves, at first,

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* Plin. l. 6. † Cæs. l. 5. Tac. Agric. c. 2.
‡ Cæsar. Pomp. Mel. Tacitus.

of that part of Britain which was next to their own country; and spreading northward, by degrees, as they increased in numbers, peopled the whole island. Some adventurers passing over from from those parts of Britain that are within sight of Ireland, were the founders of the Irish nation: which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus * mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons, and his testimony is unquestionable, when we consider that, for many ages, the language and customs of both nations were the same.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract; but even the ancient Germans themselves were Gauls. The present Germans, properly so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and customs of the two nations were similar; but their language different. The Germans † are the genuine descendants of the ancient Scandinavians, who crossed, in an early period, the Baltic. The Celtæ ‡, anciently, sent many colonies into Germany, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and customs, till they were dissipated, in the Roman empire; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were descended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the same with the Gauls that first possessed themselves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this distance of time. Whatever their origin

* Diod. Sic. l. 5. † Strabo, l. 7.
‡ Cæs. l. 6. Liv. l. 5. Tac. de Mor. Germ.

was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a presumption that they were long before settled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of aristocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where the Druids bore the chief sway. This order of men seems to have been formed on the same principles with the Dactyli Idæ and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourse with heaven, their magic and divination were the same. The knowledge of the Druids in natural causes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The esteem of the populace soon increased into a veneration for the order! which these cunning and ambitious priests took care to improve, to such a degree, that they, in a manner, ingrossed the management of civil, as well as religious matters. It is generally allowed that they did not abuse this extraordinary power; the preserving the character of sanctity was so essential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppression. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legislative power was entirely in the hands of the druids *. It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greatest danger, under one head. This temporary king, or Vergobretus,† was chosen by them, and generally laid down his office at the end of the war.[c] These priests enjoyed long this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the second

* Cæs. l. 6. † Fer-gubreth, *the man to judge.*

century that their power among the Caledonians began to decline. The traditions concerning Trathal and Cormac, ancestors to Fingal, are full of the particulars of the fall of the Druids: a singular fate, it must be owned, of priests, who had once established their superstition.

The continual wars of the Caledonians against the Romans hindered the better sort from initiating themselves, as the custom formerly was, into the order of the Druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magistrate, was chosen without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office against their will. Continual power strengthened his interest among the tribes, and enabled him to send down, as hereditary to his posterity, the office he had only received himself by election.

On occasion of a new war against the *King of the World*, as tradition emphatically calls the Roman emperor, the Druids, to vindicate the honour of the order, began to resume their ancient privilege of chusing the Vergobretus. Garmal, the son of Tarno, being deputed by them, came to the grandfather of the celebrated Fingal, who was then Vergobretus, and commanded him, in the name of the whole order, to lay down his office. Upon his refusal, a civil war commenced, which soon ended in almost the total extinction of the religious order of the Druids. A few that remained, retired to the dark recesses of their groves, and the caves they had formerly used for their meditations. It is then we find them in *the circle of stones*, and unheeded by the world. A total disregard for the order, and utter ab-

horrence of the Druidical rites ensued. Under this cloud of public hate, all that had any knowledge of the religion of the Druids became extinct, and the nation fell into the last degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies

It is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal and his son Ossian disliked the Druids., who were the declared enemies to their succession in the supreme magistracy. It is a singular case, it must be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the poems ascribed to Ossian; as the poetical compositions of other nations are so closely connected with their mythology. But gods are not necessary, when the poet has genius. It is hard to account for it to those who are not made acquainted with the manner of the old Scottish bards. That race of men carried their notions of martial honour to an extravagant pitch. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the bards immediately trasferred the glory of the action to him who had given that aid.

Had the poet brought down gods, as often as Homer hath done, to assist his heroes, his work had not consisted of eulogiums on men, but of hymns to superior beings. Those who write in the Galic language seldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they professedly write of religion, they never mix, with their compositions, the actions of their heroes. This custom alone, even though the religion of the Druids had not been previously extinguished, may, in some measure, excuse the author's silence concerning the religion of ancient times.

To allege, that a nation is void of all religion, would betray ignorance of the history of mankind. The

traditions of their fathers, and their own observations on the works of nature, together with that superstition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raised in the minds of men some idea of a superior being. Hence it is, that in the darkest times, and amongst the most barbarous nations, the very populace themselves had some faint notion, at least of a divinity. The Indians, who worship no God, believe that he exists. It would be doing injustice to the author of these poems, to think, that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greatest of all truths. But let his religion be what it will, it is certain he has not alluded to Christianity, or any of its rites, in his poems; which ought to fix his opinions, at least, to an æra prior to that religion. Conjectures, on this subject, must supply the place of proof. The persecution begun by Dioclesian, in the year 303, is the most probable time in which the first dawning of Christianity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Constantius Chlorus, who commanded then in Britain, induced the persecuted Christians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or through fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and settled among the Caledonians; who were ready to hearken to their doctrines, if the religion of the Druids was exploded long before.

These missionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took possession of the cells and groves of the Druids; and it was from this retired life they had the name of *Culdees*,*

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* Culdich.

which, in the language of the country, signified *sequestered persons.* It was with one of the *Culdees* that Ossian, in his extreme old age, is said to have disputed concerning the Christian religion. This dispute, they say, is extant, and is couched in verse, according to the custom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Ossian of the Christian tenets, shews, that that religion had only lately been introduced, as it is not easy to conceive, how one of the first rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The dispute bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The obsolete phrases and expressions peculiar to the times, prove it to be no forgery. If Ossian then lived at the introduction of Christianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century. Tradition here steps in with a kind of proof.

The exploits of Fingal against Caracul,* the son of the *king of the world,* are among the first brave actions of his youth. A complete poem, which relates to this subject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the emperor Severus, after returning from his expedition against the Caledonians, at York, fell into the tedious illness of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, resuming courage from his indisposition, took arms in order to recover the possessions they had lost. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to destroy it with fire and sword.

* Carac'huil, *terrible eye.* Carac-'healla, *terrible look.* Carac-challamh, *a sort of upper garment.*

His orders were but ill executed, for his son, Caracalla, was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with schemes to supplant his brother Geta.—— He scarcely had entered the enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead.—A sudden peace is patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Cassius, the country they had lost to Severus was restored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the son of Severus, the emperor of Rome, whose dominions were extended almost over the known world, was not without reason called *the Son of the King of the World.* The space of time between 211, the year Severus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not so great, but Ossian, the son of Fingal, might have seen the Christians whom the persecution under Dioclesian had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

In one of the many lamentations on the death of Oscar, a battle which he fought against Caros, king of ships, on the banks of the winding Carun,* is mentioned among his great actions. It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here, is the same with the noted usurper Carausius, who assumed the purple in the year 287, and seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius, in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called *the King of Ships.* The *winding Carun* is that small river retaining still the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carausius

* Car-avon, *winding river.*

repaired to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians. Several other passages in traditions allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two just mentioned clearly fix the epocha of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Irish histories, which place the death of Fingal, the son of Comhal, in the year 283, and that of Oscar and their own celebrated Cairbre, in the year 296.

Some people may imagine, that the allusions to the Roman history might have been derived, by tradition from learned men, more than from ancient poems. This must then have happened at least three ages ago, as these allusions are mentioned often in the compositions of those times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbarism overspread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men, addicted to superstition, contracted a narrowness that destroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compositions of those times trivial and puerile to the last degree. But let it be allowed, that, amidst all the untoward circumstances of the age, a genius might arise; it is not easy to determine what could induce him to allude to the Roman times. We find no fact to favour any designs which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century.

The strongest objection to the antiquity of the poems now given to the public under the name of Ossian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through so many centuries. Ages of barbarism, some will say, could not produce poems abounding with the disinterested and generous sentiments so conspicuous in the compositions of Ossian;

and could these ages produce them, it is impossible but they must be lost, or altogether corrupted in a long succession of barbarous generations.

These objections naturally suggest themselves to men unacquainted with the ancient state of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the Druids, did not share their bad fortune. They were spared by the victorious king, as it was through their means only he could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to establish his power by their songs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had no ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhimes of the bards. In the mean time, men assumed sentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbarism. The bards who were originally the disciples of the Druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated into the learning of that celebratad order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and ascribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs made this ideal character the model of their conduct; and, by degrees, brought their minds to that generous spirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as described in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in station. This emulation continuing, formed at last the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a polished people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the

characteristics of a nation, their actions become interesting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous spirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of perpetuating them. This is the true source of that divine inspiration, to which the poets of all ages pretended. When they found their themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varnished them over with fables, supplied by their own fancy, or furnished by absurd traditions. These fables, however ridiculous, had their abettors; posterity either implicitly believed them, or, through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what character she pleased of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preservation of what remains of the more ancient poems. Their poetical merit made their heroes famous in a country where heroism was much esteemed and admired. The posterity of those heroes, or those who pretended to be descended from them, heard with pleasure the eulogiums of their ancestors; bards were employed to repeat the poems, and to record the connection of their patrons with chiefs so renowned. Every chief in process of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at last hereditary. By the succession of these bards, the poems concerning the ancestors of the family were handed down from generation to generation; they were repeated to the whole clan on solemn occasions, and always alluded to in the new compositions of the bards. This custom came down to near our own times; and after the bards were discontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compositions,

and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their poems.

The use of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the institution of the bards: the records of the families of their patrons, their own, and more ancient poems, were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compositions were admirably contrived, for that purpose. They were adapted to music; and the most perfect harmony was observed. Each verse was so connected with those which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a stanza, it was almost impossible to forget the rest. The cadences followed in so natural a gradation, and the words were so adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raised to a certain key, that it was almost impossible, from a similarity of sound, to substitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the sense or weaken the expression. The numerous flections of consonants, and variation in declension, make the language very copious.

The descendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its isles, were not singular in this method of preserving the most precious monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verse, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became so fond of this custom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes, were preserved in the same manner. All the historical monuments of the old Germans were

comprehended in their ancient songs *; which were either hymns to their gods, or elegies in praise of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great events in their nation which were carefully interwoven with them. This species of composition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition †. The care they took to have the poems taught to their children, the uninterrupted custom of repeating them upon certain occasions, and the happy measure of the verse, served to preserve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eighth century; and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing, that is not committed to writing, fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcillasso composed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had lost all other monuments of their history, and it was from ancient poems, which his mother, a princess of the blood of the Yncas, taught him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his history. If other nations then, that had often been overrun by enemies, and had sent abroad and received colonies, could for many ages preserve, by oral tradition, their laws and histories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient Scots, a people so free of intermixture with foreigners, and so strongly attached to the memory of their ancestors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

What is advanced, in this short Dissertation, it must be confessed, is mere conjecture. Beyond the reach of

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* Tacitus de Mor. Germ.

† *Abbé de la Bleterie Remarques sur la Germaine.*

records, is settled a gloom, which no ingenuity can penetrate. The manners described, in these poems, suit the ancient Celtic times, and no other period that is known in history. We must, therefore, place the heroes far back in Antiquity; and it matters little, who were their contemporaries in other parts of the world. If we have placed Fingal in his proper period, we do honour to the manners of barbarous times. He exercised every manly virtue in Caledonia, while Heliogabulus disgraced human nature at Rome.

A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.

A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN.

THE history of those nations, who originally possessed the north of Europe, is less known than their manners. Destitute of the use of letters, they themselves had not the means of transmitting their great actions to remote posterity. Foreign writers saw them only at a distance, and described them as they found them. The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and consequently their history unworthy of being investigated. Their manners and singular character were matters of curiosity, as they committed them to record. Some men, otherwise of great merit among ourselves, give into confined ideas on this subject. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any nation destitute of the use of letters.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and

Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in the times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and those manly pursuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie in some degree concealed behind forms, and artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigour. The times of regular government, and polished manners, are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted, in their revolutions and migrations, which were so frequent and universal, that no kingdom in Europe is now possessed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in process of time, lost all knowledge of their own origin. If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time, free from intermixture with

foreigners. We are to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from those who possess the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free from that toil and business, which engross the attention of a commercial people. Their amusement consisted in hearing or repeating their songs and traditions, and these entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods are only to be regarded in so far as they coincide with cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the historians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itself, they give a long list of ancient kings, and a detail of their transactions, with a scrupulous exactness. One might naturally suppose, that, when they had no authentic annals, they should, at least, have recourse to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular system of history. Of both they seem to have been equally destitute. Born in the low country, and stran-

gers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themselves with copying from one another, and retailing the same fictions, in a new colour and dress.

John Fordun was the first who collected those fragments of the Scots history, which had escaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in so far as they concerned recent transactions, deserved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unsatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Destitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found there, that the Irish bards had carried their pretensions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions, and the order of succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his prede-

cessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of *Caledonians*. From their very name, it appears, that they were of those *Gauls*, who possessed themselves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* words, *Caël* signifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun* or *Don*, *a hill*; so that *Caël-don*, or Caledonians, is as much as to say, the *Celts of the hill country*. The Highlanders, to this day, call themselves *Caël*, and their language *Caëlic*, or *Galic*, and their country *Caëldoch*, which the Romans softened into *Caledonia*. This, of itself, it sufficient to demonstrate, they are the genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of Scots, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word *Caël*, which signifies *strangers*, as well as *Gauls*, or *Celts*, some have imagined, that the ancestors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the rest of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, say they, is supported by Tacitus, who, from several circumstances, concludes, that the Caledonians were of German extraction. A discussion of a point

so intricate, at this distance of time, could neither be satisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we meet with the *Scots* in the north. Porphyrius* makes the first mention of them about that time. As the *Scots* were not heard of before that period, most writers supposed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the *Picts* were the only genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians. This mistake is easily removed. The Caledonians, in process of time, became naturally divided into two distinct nations, as possessing parts of the country entirely different in their nature and soil. The western coast of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the east the country is plain, and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as suited best with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called, by their neighbours, SCUITE, or *the wandering nation*; which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, as the division of the country was plain and fertile, applied themselves to agriculture, and raising of corn. It was from this, that the Gallic name of the *Picts* proceeded; for they are called, in that language, *Cruithnich*, i. e. *the wheat or corn eaters*. As the Picts lived in a country so different in its nature

* St. Hierom, ad Ctesiphon.

from that possessed bp the Scots, so their national character suffered a material change. Unobstructed by mountains, or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became sooner established among them, than among the Scots, and, consequently, they were much sooner governed by civil magistrates and laws. This, at last, produced so great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almost continual quarrels and animosities subsisted between them. These animosities, after some ages, ended in the subversion of the Pictish kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to most of the Scots writers, who seemed to think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate, than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was lost, and those that remained were so completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they soon lost all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictish government is placed so near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or history remaining. This favours the system I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of course would be different. The contrary is the case. The names of places in the Pictish dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Galic original, which is a convincing proof, that the two nations were, of old, one and the same, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their situation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of *Picts* is said to have been given by the Romans to the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. The story is silly and the argument absurd. But let us revere antiquity in her very follies. This circumstance made some imagine, that the Picts were of British extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, settled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be easily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts From this circumstance, affirm some antiquaries, proceeded the name of the latter, to distinguish them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who discontinued it after the Roman conquest.

The Caledonians, most certainly, acquired a considerable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coast intersected with many arms of the sea, and in islands, divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous firths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they very early found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within sight of their own country. That Ireland was first peopled from Britain, is, at length, a matter that admits of no doubt. The vicinity of the two islands; the exact correspondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are sufficient proofs, even if we had not the testimony of * authors of undoubted veracity to confirm it. The abettors of the most romantic systems of Irish anti-

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* Dio. Sic. l. 5.

quities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain in an improbable and remote æra. I shall easily admit, that the colony of the *Firbolg*, confessedly the *Belgæ* of Britain, settled in the south of Ireland, before the *Caël*, or Caledonians, discovered the north: but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the Firbolg to Ireland happened many centuries before the Christian æra.

The poem of Temora throws considerable light on this subject. The accounts given in it agree so well with what the ancients have delivered concerning the first population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiassed person will confess them more probable, than the legends handed down, by tradition, in that country. It appears, that, in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was possessed by two nations; the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain, who inhabited the south, and the *Caël*, who passed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulster. The two nations, as is usual among an unpolished and lately settled people, were divided into small dynasties, subject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this situation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the state of the island, until Crothar, lord of Atha, a country in Connaught *, the most potent chief of the *Firbolg*, carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the *Caël*, who possessed Ulster.

Conlama had been betrothed some time before to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch resented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an

* No! In Ulster—on the banks of Lochneagh. *C.*

irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppose his progress. Crothar himself then took arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war, upon this, became general between the two nations, and the Caël were reduced to the last extremity. In this situation, they applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who sent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulster, was chosen king, by the unanimous consent of the Caledonian tribes, who possessed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and success; but the *Firbolg* appear to have been rather repelled than subdued. In succeeding reigns, we learn, from episodes in the same poem, that the chiefs of Atha made several efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar*.

To Conar succeeded his son Cormac, who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he seems to have been driven to the last extremity, by an insurrection of the *Firbolg*, who supported the pretensions of the chiefs of Atha to the Irish throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colculla, chief of Atha, and re-established Cormac in the sole possession of all Ireland. It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Roscrana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Ossian.

Cormac was succeeded in the Irish throne by his son,

* In this they ultimately succeeded—it being their birthright. The O'Neils were kings of Ulster for many centuries afterwards—the original Lords of Atha. *C.*

Cairbre: Cairbre by Artho, his son, who was the father of that Cormac, in whose minority the invasion of Swaran happened, which is the subject of the poem of *Fingal*. The family of Atha, who had not relinquished their pretensions to the Irish throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this mounted the throne. His usurpation soon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and restored, after various vicissitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the possession, of the kingdom. This war is the subject of Temora; the events, though certainly heightened and embellished by poetry, seem, notwithstanding, to have their foundation in true history.

Temora contains not only the history of the first migration of the Caledonians into Ireland; it also preserves some important facts, concerning the first settlement of the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ of Britain,* in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was ancestor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who successively mounted the Irish throne, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho. I forbear to transcribe the passage, on account of its length. It is the song of Fonar, the bard; towards the latter end of the seventh book of Temora. As the generations from Larthon to Cathmor, to whom the episode is addressed, are not marked, as are those of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the settlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable it was some time before the *Cael*, or Caledonians, settled in Ulster. One important fact may be gathered from this history, that the Irish had no king before the latter end of the first

century. *Fingal lived, it is supposed, in** the *third* century; so Conar, the first monarch of the Irish, who was his grand-uncle, cannot be placed farther back than the close of the first. To establish this fact, is to lay, at once, aside the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Irish, and to get quit of the long list of kings which the latter give us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon prior to the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true history of Ireland begins somewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware†, who was indefatigable in his researches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Irish, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this consideration, that he begins his history at the introduction of Christianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down concerning the times of paganism, were tales of late invention, strangely mixed with anachronisms and inconsistencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected with uncommon industry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuscripts, concerning the history of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and self-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the last degree, they have disgraced the antiquities they meant to establish. It is to be wished, that some able Irishman, who understands the language and records of his

* Here Macpherson appears to have taken no notice of the Fions or Fins, kings of Scotland. *C.*

† War. de antiq. Hybern. præ. p. 1.

country, may redeem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of these idle fabulists.

By comparing the history in these poems with the legends of the Scots and Irish writers, and by afterwards examining both by the test of the Roman authors, it is easy to discover which is the most probable. Probability is all that can be established on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypothesis laid down by contemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finishes the figure of which they only drew the out-lines, it ought, in the judgment of sober reason, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and distant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a son of Fingal of that name, who makes a considerable figure in Ossian's poems. The three elder sons, of Fingal, Ossian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without issue, the succession, of course, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth son, and his posterity. This Fergus, say some traditions, was the father of Congal, whose son was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the first king of Scots, as it was in his time the *Caël*, who possessed the western coast of Scotland, began to be distinguished, by foreigners, by the name of *Scots*. From thenceforward, the Scots and Picts, as distinct nations, became objects of attention to the historians of other countries. The internal state of the two Caledonian kingdoms has

always continued, and ever must remain, in obscurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we must fix the beginning of the decay of that species of heroism which subsisted in the days of Fingal. There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The second begins when property is established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government, to which they trust the safety of their persons and property. As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of sentiment. The middle state is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the second stage, and, consequently, into those circumscribed sentiments, which always distinguished barbarity. The events which soon after happened did not all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domestic commotions, entirely forsook Britain, finding it impossible to defend so distant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, seizing this favourable opportunity, made incursions into the deserted province. The Britons, enervated by the slavery of several centuries, and those vices which are inseparable from an advanced state of civility, were not able to withstand the impetuous, though irregular attacks of a barbarous enemy.

In the utmost distress, they applied to their old masters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate state of the Empire could not spare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave with the enemies of whom they were so much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themselves, considerably, towards the south. It is, in this period, we must place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The seat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the south, to be near the common enemy, in case of sudden incursions. Instead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in search of subsistence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raising of corn. This manner of life was the first means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with strangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable the most of the old inhabitants remained. These incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they themselves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the most predominant, retained still their language, and as many of the customs of their ancestors as suited with the nature of the country they possessed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally descended from the same stock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as similar as the different natures of the countries they possessed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars, and other transactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the south of Scotland were alternately possessed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots, and, it is probable, that most of the Saxon inhabitants remained in possession of their lands. During the several conquests and revolutions in England, many fled, for refuge, into Scotland, to avoid the oppression of foreigners, or the tyranny of domestic usurpers; in so much, that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottish kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground, on the tongue and customs of the ancient Caledonians, till, at last, the latter were entirely relegated to the inhabitants of the mountains, who were still unmixed with strangers.

It was after the accession of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered, by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions, which, afterwards, sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own *Regulus*, who either was, or in the succession of a few generations, was regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive

heaths and impassable mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In these valleys the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural seat of the red-deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward state of agriculture, the valleys were not unfertile; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at least the necessaries, of life. Here the chief lived, the supreme judge and lawgiver of his own people; but his sway was neither severe nor unjust. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, so he, in return, considered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though absolute and decisive, partook more of the authority of a father than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was considered as the property of the chief, yet his vassals made him no other consideration for their lands than services, neither burdensome nor frequent. As he seldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was supplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence, the Highland chiefs lived, for many ages. At a distance from the

seat of government, and secured, by the inaccessibleness of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with strangers, the customs of their ancestors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their ancestors, they delighted in traditions and songs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and especially of their own particular families. A succession of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As Fingal and his chiefs were the most renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place them in the genealogy of every great family. They became famous among the people, and an object of fiction and poetry to the bards.

The bards erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their songs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expressions, and the manners they represent, may please those who understand the language; their obscurity and inaccuracy would disgust in a translation. It was chiefly for this reason, that I have rejected wholly the works of the bards in my publications. Ossian acted in a more extensive sphere, and his ideas ought to be more noble and universal; neither gives he, I presume, so many of those peculiarities which are only understood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in this species of composition. Their rhimes, only calculated to kindle a martial spirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleasure to genuine taste. This observation only regards their po-

ems of the heroic kind; in every inferior species of poetry they are more successful. They express the tender melancholy of desponding love, with simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions, except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local, to be admired, in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the scenes they describe, they must afford pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of their description and sentiment, that, probably, has kept them hitherto in the obscurity of an almost lost language *. The ideas of an unpolished period are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required, to relish them as they deserve. Those who alone are capable of transferring ancient poetry into a modern language, might be better employed in giving originals of their own, were it not for that wretched envy and meanness which affects to despise cotemporary genius. My first publication was merely accidental. Had I then met with less approbation, my after-pursuits would have been more pro-

* *Quere*. Was it ever known out of the Highlands, till carried by Scotsmen? *C.*

fitable; at least I might have continued to be stupid, without being branded with dulness.

These poems may furnish light to antiquaries, as well as some pleasure to the lovers of poetry. The first population of Ireland, its first kings, and several circumstances, which regard its connection of old with the south and north of Britain, are presented in several episodes. The subject and catastrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the first peopling of that country, and the contests between the two British nations, who originally inhabited that island. In a preceding part of this Dissertation, I have shewn how superior the probability of this system is to the undigested fictions of the Irish bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Irish and Scottish historians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have all along expressed my doubts concerning the veracity and abilities of those who deliver down their ancient history. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, arising from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obscure antiquity. No kingdom now established in Europe can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, inconsiderable as it may appear in other respects, even according to my system, so that it is altogether needless to fix its origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since the first publication of these poems, many insinuations have been made, and doubts arisen, concerning their authenticity. Whether these suspicions are suggested by prejudice, or are only the effects of malice, I neither know nor care. Those who have doubted my veracity, have paid a compliment to my

genius; and were even the allegation true, my self-denial might have atoned for my fault. Without vanity I say it, I think I could write tolerable poetry; and I assure my antagonists, that I should not translate what I could not imitate.

As prejudice is the effect of ignorance, I am not surprized at its being general. An age that produces few marks of genius ought to be sparing of admiration. The truth is, the bulk of mankind have ever been led, by reputation more than taste, in articles of literature. If all the Romans, who admired Virgil, understood his beauties, he would have scarce deserved to have come down to us, through so many centuries. Unless genius were in fashion, Homer himself might have written in vain. He that wishes to come with weight, on the superficial, must skim the surface, in their own shallow way. Were my aim to gain the many, I would write a madrigal sooner than an heroic poem. Laberius himself would be always sure of more followers than Sophocles.

Some who doubt the authenticity of this work, with peculiar acuteness appropriate them to the Irish nation. Though it is not easy to conceive how these poems can belong to Ireland and to me, at once, I shall examine the subject, without further animadversion on the blunder.

Of all the nations descended from the ancient *Celtæ*, the Scots and Irish are the most similar in language, customs, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote descent from the great Celtic stock. It is evident, in short, that at some one period or other, they formed one society, were subject to the same government, and were, in all

respect, one and the same people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother nation, I have in another work amply discussed. The first circumstance that induced me to disregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation, was my observations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, spoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now spoken, or even that which has been written for some centuries back, amongst the most unmixed part of the Irish nation. A Scotchman, tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the *Galic* of North Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand, without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in the *Galic* tongue, This affords a proof, that the *Scotch Galic* is the most original, and, consequently, the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Irish, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, seem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they speak. They call their own language *Caëlic, Eirinarch*, i. e. *Caledonian Irish*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britain *a Chaëlic*, or the *Caledonian tongue*, emphatically. A circumstance of this nature tends more to decide which is the most ancient nation, than the united testimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and senachies, who, perhaps, never dreamt of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till some one of them, more learned than the rest, discovered, that the Romans called the first *Iberia*,

and the latter *Hibernia*. On such a slight foundation were probably built the romantic fictions, concerning the Milesians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it sufficiently appears, that the poems published under the name of Ossian, are not of Irish composition. The favourite chimæra, that Ireland is the mother country of the Scots, is totally subverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of successive *senachies* and *fileas*, are found, at last, to be the spurious blood of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are, of their pretended *Iberian* descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems, so subversive of their system, could never be produced by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's Paradise Lost could be wrote by a Scottish peasant, as to suppose, that the poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems, concerning the *Fiond*, or the heroes of *Fion Mac Comnal*. This *Fion*, say the Irish annalists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned, that Ireland had an *embodied* militia so early, is not easy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems concerning *Fion*. I have just now, in my hands, all that remain, of those compositions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear

to be the work of a a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, affords striking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century, are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste, which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated *Fion*, could scarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomsticks, were continually hovering round him, like crows; and he had freed enchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In short, *Fion*, great as he was, passed a disagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the mischiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, assisted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings, as tall as the main-mast of a first rate. It must be owned, however, that *Fion* was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air *Cromleach*, druim-ard,
Chos eile air Crom-meal dubh,
Thoga *Fion* le lamh mhoir
An d'uisge o *Lubhair* na fruth.

With one foot on *Cromleach* his brow,
The other on *Crommal* the dark,
Fion took up with his large hand
The water from *Lubar* of the streams.

Cromleach and *Crommal* were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulster, and the river *Lubar* ran through the intermediate valley. The property of such a monster as this *Fion*, I should never

have disputed with any nation. But the bard himself, in the poem from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

> FION O ALBIN, siol nan laoich!
>
> FION *from* ALBION, *race of heroes!*

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this distance of time, I should have given, as my opinion, that this enormous *Fion* was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or some othe celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whose inhabitants, now at least, are not remarkable for their stature. As for the poetry, I leave it to the reader.

If *Fion* was so remarkable for his stature, his heroes had also other extraordinary properties. *In weight all the sons of strangers* yielded to the celebrated Toniosal; and for hardness of skull, and, perhaps, for thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood *unrivalled and alone.* Ossian himself had many singular and less delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuthullin was of so diminutive a size, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illustrate this subject, I shall here lay before the reader, the history of some of the Irish poems, concerning *Fion Mac Comnal.* A translation of these pieces, if well executed, might afford satisfaction, in an uncommon way, to the Public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth, from obscurity, the poems of my own country, has wasted all the time I had allotted for the muses; besides, I am too diffident of my own abilities, to undertake such a work. A gentleman in Dublin accused me to the public, of committing blunders and absurdities,

in translating the language of my own country, and that before any translation of mine appeared *. How the gentlemen came to see my blunders before I committed them, is not easy to determine; if he did not conclude, that, as a Scotsman, and, of course descended of the Milesian race, I might have committed some of those oversights, which, perhaps very unjustly, are said to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Irish poems, concerning the *Fiona*, it appears, that *Fion Mac Comnal* flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed, by the universal consent of the senachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his son Ossian is made cotemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the gospel in Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Ossian, though, at that time, he must have been two hundred and fifty years of age,

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* In Faulkner's Dublin Journal, of the 1st December 1761, appeared the following Advertisement: two weeks before my first publication appeared in London.

Speedily will be published, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been, for some time past, employed in translating and writing historical notes to

FINGAL, A POEM,

Originally wrote in the Irish or Erse language. In the preface to which, the translator, who is a perfect master of the Irish tongue, will give an account of the manners and customs of the ancient Irish or Scotch; and, therefore, most humbly intreats the public, to wait for his edition, which will appear in a short time, as he will set forth all the blunders and absurdities in the edition now printing in London, and shew the ignorance of the English translator in his knowledge of Irish grammar, not understanding any part of that accidence.

had a daughter young enough to become wife to the saint. On account of this family connection, *Patrick of the Psalms*, for so the apostle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Ossian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The saint sometimes threw off the austerity of his profession, drunk freely, and had his soul properly warmed with wine, to receive with becoming enthusiasm, the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of useful information:

> Lo don rabh PADRIC na mhúr,
> Gun *Sailm* air uidh, ach a gól,
> Ghluais é thigh *Ossian* mhic *Fhion*,
> O san leis bu bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is *Teantach mor na Fiona*. It appears to have been founded on the same story with the *battle of Lora*. The circumstances and catastrophe in both are much the same; but the *Irish* Ossian discovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky anachronism. After describing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, that none of the foe escaped, but a few, who were permitted to go on a pilgrimage to the *Holy Land*. This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade; for, it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so ancient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called,

> Riogh *Lochlin* an do shloigh,
> *King of Denmark of two nations*,

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway

and Denmark, a circumstance which happened under Margaret de Waldemar, in the close of the fourteenth age. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain, he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating *Fion*, or *Fingal*, to themselves. He concludes the poem, with this reflection.

> Na fagha se comhthróm nan n' arm,
> Erragon Mac Annir nan lánn glas
> 'San n' ALBIN ni n' abairtair Triath
> Agus ghlaoite an n' *Fhiona* as.

"Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords, avoided the equal contest of arms, (single combat,) no chief should have afterwards been numbered in ALBION, and the heroes of Fion should no more be named."

The next poem that falls under our observation is *Cath-cabhra*, or, *The death of Oscar*. This piece is founded on the same story which we have in the first book of Temora. So little thought the author of *Cath-cabhra* of making Oscar his countryman, that, in the course of two hundred lines, of which the poems consist, he puts the following expression thrice in the mouth of the hero:

> ALBIN an sa d' roina m' arach.——
> ALBION *where I was born and bred.*

The poem contains almost all the incidents in the first book of Temora. In one circumstance the bard differs materially from Ossian. Oscar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a prospect of the sea. A fleet appeared at a distance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo shean-athair at' án
'S iad a tiächd le cabhair chugain,
O ALBIN na n' ioma stuagh.

"It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from ALBION of many waves!"——The testimony of this bard is sufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty: for, though he is far from being ancient it is probable, he flourished a full century before these historians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Christian than chronologer; for *Fion*, though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the soul of his grandson to his Redeemer.

Duan a Gharibb Mac-Starn is another Irish poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of sentiment, might have induced me to give a translation of it, had not I some expectations, which are now over, of seeing it in the collection of the Irish Ossian's poems, promised twelve years since, to the public. The author descends sometimes from the region of the sublime to low and indecent description; the last of which, the Irish translator, no doubt, will choose to leave in the obscurity of the original. In this piece Cuthullin is used with very little ceremony, for he is oft called the *dog of Tara*, in the county of Meath. This severe title of the *redoubtable Cuthullin*, the most renowned of Irish champions, proceeded from the poet's ignorance of etymology. Cu, *voice*, or commander, signifies also a *dog*. The poet chose the last, as the most noble appellation for his hero.

The subject of the poem is the same with that of the epic poem of Fingal. *Caribb Mac-Starn* is the same with Ossian's Swaran, the son of Starno. His single

combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the *celebrated dog of Tara*, i. e. Cuthullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. *Caribb's* progress in search of Cuthullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuthullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls *the guiding star of the women of Ireland*. The property of this enormous lady I shall not dispute with him, or any other. But, as he speaks with great tenderness of the *daughters of the convent*, and throws out some hints against the English nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuthullin.

Another Irish Ossian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and sentiment, speaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac Gomnal*, as an Irishman. Little can be said for the judgment of this poet, and less for his delicacy of sentiment. The history of one of his episodes may, at once, stand as a specimen of his want of both. Ireland in the days of *Fion*, happened to be threatened with an invasion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needless to insist upon the impropriety of a French invasion of Ireland: it is sufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. *Fion*, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invasion, sent Ca-olt, Ossian and Oscar, to watch the bay, in which it was apprehended, the enemy was to land. Oscar was the worst choice of a scout that could be made, for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post, nor was it possible to awake him,

without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of wakening him, and they, at last, fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

> Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gán,
> Agus a n' aighai' chiean gun bhuail;
> Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

"Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone rebounded and rolled away." Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage upon his enemies, which he did to so good purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-iosal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-iosal, though brave, was so heavy and unwieldy, that when he sat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to set him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared, and he gave so good an account of them, that *Fion*, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the spoil among his soldiers.

All these extraordinary heroes, Fion, Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, says the poet, were

> Siol Erin na gorm lánn.
> *The sons of* Erin *of blue steel.*

Neither shall I much dispute the matter with him; He has my consent also to appropriate to Ireland the

celebrated Ton-iosal. I shall only say, that they are different persons from those of the same name, in the Scotch poems; and that, though the stupendous valour of the first is so remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is somewhat extraordinary, that *Fion*, who lived some ages before St. Patrick, swears like a very good Christian:

Air an Dia do chum gach *case.*
By God, who shaped every case.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, Ossian, who lived in St. Patrick's days, seems to have understood something of the English, a language not then subsisting. A person, more sanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue from this circumstance, that this pretendedly Irish Ossian was a native of Scotland; for my countrymen are universally allowed to have an exclusive right to the second-sight.

From the instances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the *Fiona*. The greatest part of them make the heroes of *Fion*,

Siol Albion a n'nioma caoile.
The race of Albion *of many firths.*

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side, From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person

tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that the language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to shew, how the Irish bards begun to appropriate the Scottish Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or, at least, paid little regard to their government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship with the English. The similarity of manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the same enemy, created a free and friendly intercourse between the Scottish and Irish nations. As the custom of retaining bards and senachies was common to both; so each, no doubt, had formed a system of history, it matters not how much soever fabulous, concerning their respective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if possible, to reduce them from the same original stock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progress in the south of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional history of the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from several concurring circumstances, into the last degree of ignorance and barbarism. The Irish, who, for some ages before the conquest, had possessed a competent share of that kind of learning, which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impose their own fictions

on the ignorant Highland senachies. By flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long list of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, assumed to themselves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was established that Hibernian system of the original of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was universally received. The Scots of the low-country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it, their national traditions, received, implicitly, the history of their country, from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over into the Hibernian system.

These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact, of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestible is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion, by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own national traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scots nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from falling to the ground so improbable a story.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued further than it deserves; but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland, was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems, concerning the *Fiona*, should appear ridiculous,

it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations, at that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland have displayed a genius for poetry. It was, alone, in matters of antiquity, that they were monstrous in their fables. Their love-sonnets, and their elegies on the death of persons worthy or renowned, abound with simplicity, and a wild harmony of numbers. They become more than an atonement for their errors, in every other species of poetry. But the beauty of these species, depends so much on a certain *curiosa felicitas* of expression in the original, that they must appear much to disadvantage in another language.

A CRITICAL DISSERTATION

ON THE

POEMS OF OSSIAN,

THE

SON OF FINGAL.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient state of the nations, few are more valuable than their poems or songs. History, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is seldom very instructive. The beginnings of society, in every country, are involved in fabulous confusion; and though they were not, they would furnish few events worth recording. But, in every period of society, human manners are a curious spectacle; and the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. These present to us, what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford, The history of human imagination and passion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages; discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued,

before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind.

Besides this merit, which ancient poems have with philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They promise some of the highest beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpolished we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the same time, with that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry. For many circumstances of those times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical spirit. That state, in which human nature shoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and passion.

In the infancy of societies, men live scattered and dispersed, in the midst of solitary rural scenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprize are frequently exited; and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost, their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise: and converse and act in the uncovered simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours; which of course renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the in-

fluence of imagination and passion over the form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society. Figures are commonly considered as artificial modes of speech, devised by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined state. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have used so many figures of style, as in those rude ages, when, besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper and precise terms for the ideas they would express, obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, of this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold and metaphorical style, than a modern European would adventure to use in an Epic poem.

In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination, less. Fewer objects occur that are new or surprising. Men apply themselves to trace the causes of things; they correct and refine one another; they subdue or disguise their passions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform standard of politeness and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and at the same time, from fervour and enthusiasm, to correctness and precision. Style becomes more chaste, but less animated. The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most

vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not to their maturity, till the imagination begins to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their liveliness and vivacity; so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.

Poetry has been said to be more ancient than prose: and however paradoxical such an assertion may seem, yet, in a qualified sense, it is true. Men certainly never conversed with one another in regular numbers; but even their ordinary language would in ancient times, for the reasons before assigned, approach to a poetical style; and the first compositions transmitted to posterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal sense, poems; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone. Music or song has been found coeval with society among the most barbarous nations. The only subjects which could prompt men, in their first rude state, to utter their thoughts in compositions of any length, were such as naturally assumed the tone of poetry; praises of their gods, or of their ancestors; commemorations of their own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compositions, except songs or poems, could take such hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preserved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the an-

tiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring. What we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than accidental; it is characteristical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof.

Our present subject leads us to investigate the ancient poetical remains, not so much of the east, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the northern nations; in order to discover whether the Gothic poetry has any resemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to consider. Though the Goths, under which name we usually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earliest times, had their poets and their songs. Their poets were distinguished by the

title of *Scalders*, and their songs were termed *Vyses* *. Savo Grammaticus, a Danish historian of considerable

* Olaus Wormius, in the appendix to his Treatise de Literatura Runica, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from *Runes*, which signifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than 136 different kinds of measure, or verse, used in their *Vyses*; and though we are accustomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he says expressly, that among all these measures, rhyme, or correspondence of final syllables, was never employed. He analyses the structure of one of these kinds of verse, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very singular species of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of syllables, but chiefly upon the number of the syllables, and the disposition of the letters. In every stanza was an equal number of lines: in every line six syllables. In each distich, it was requisite that three words should begin with the same letter; two of the corresponding words placed in the first line of the distich, the third, in the second line. In each line were also required two syllables, but never the final ones, formed either of the same consonants, or same vowels. As an example of this measure, Olaüs gives us these two Latin lines constructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verse:

Christus caput nostrum
Coronet te bonis.

The initial letters of Christus, Caput, and Coronet, make the three corresponding letters of the distich. In the first line, the first syllables of Christus and of nostrum; in the second line, the *on* in coronet and in bonis make the requisite correspondence of syllables. Frequent inversions and transpositions were permitted in this poetry; which would naturally follow from such laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious in this subject may consult likewise Dr. Hicks's Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium; particularly the 23d chapter of his Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica et Mæso-Gothica; where they will find a full account of the structure of the Anglo-

note who flourished in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of these songs, containing the ancient traditionary stories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character, several of which he has translated into Latin, and inserted into his History. But his versions are plainly so paraphrastical, and forced into such an imitation of the style and the measures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native spirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preserved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Literatura Runica, It is an Epicedium, or funeral song, composed by Regner Lodbrog; and translated by Olaus, word for word from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the same time an eminent *Scalder* or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at last into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into prison, and condemned to be destroyed by serpents. In this situation he solaced himself with rehearsing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine stanzas, of ten lines each; and every stanza begins with these words, Pugnavimus ensibus, We have fought with our swords, Olaus's version is in many places so obscure as to be hardly intelligible. I have subjoined the whole below, exactly as he has published it; and shall trans-

Saxon verse, which nearly resembled the Gothic. They will find also some specimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Danish Scalders, entitled Hervarer Saga, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of Miscellany Poems, published by Mr. Dryden.

late as much as may give the English reader an idea of the spirit and strain of this kind of poetry *.

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* I

Pugnavimus ensibus
Haud post longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia accessimus
Ad serpentis immensi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod serpentem transfodi
Hirsutam braccam ob illam cedem
Cuspide ictum intuli in colubrum
Fero lucidorum stupendiorum.

II.

Multum juvenis fui quando acquisivimus
Orientem versus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem sonuerunt
Ad sublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam escam
Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in sanguine Cæsorum.

III.

Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti annos numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus passim
Vicimus octo barones
In oriente ante Dimini portum
Aquilæ impetravimus tunc sufficientem
Hospitii sumptum in illa strage
Sudor decidit in vulnerum
Oceano perdidit exercitus ætatem.

IV.

Pugnæ facta copia
Cum Helsingianos postulavimus

"We have fought with our swords. I was young, "when, towards the east, in the bay of Oreon, we

---

Ad aulum Odini
Naves dreximus in ostium Vistulæ
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladias in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.

V.

Memini neminem tunc fugisse
Priusquam in navibus
Heraudus in bello caderet
Non findit navibus
Alius baro præstantior
Mare ad portum
In navibus longis post illum
Sic attulit princeps passim
Alacre in bellum cor

VI.

Exercitus abjecit clypeos
Cum hasta volavit
Ardua ad virorum pectora
Momordit Scarforum cautes
Gladius in pugna
Sanguineus erat Clypeus
Antequam Rafno rex caderet
Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
Calidus in loricas sudor.

VII.

Habere potuerunt tum corvi
Ante Indirorum insulas
Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
Acquisivimus feris carnivoris
Plenum prandium unico actu
Difficile erat unius facere mentionem

"made torrents of blood flow, to gorge the ravenou
"beast of prey, and the yellow-footed bird. There

Oriente sole
Spicula vidi pungere
Propulerunt arcus ex se ferra.

VIII.

Altum mugierunt enses
Antequam in Laneo compo
Eislinus rex cecidi
Processimus auro ditati
Ad terram prostratorum dimicandum
Gladius secuit Clypeorum
Picturas in galearum conventu
Cervicum mustum ex vulneribus
Diffusum per cerebrum fissum.

IX.

Tenuimus Clypeos in sanguine
Cum hastam unximus
Ante Boring holmum
Telorum nubes disrumpunt clypeum
Extrusit arcus ex se metallum
Volnir cecidit in conflictu
Non erat illo rex major
Cœsi dispersi late per littora
Feræ amplectebantur escam.

X.

Pugna manifeste crescebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in auream
Loricam in pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

" resounded the hard steel upon the lofty helmets of " men. The whole ocean was one wound. The crow

---

XI.

Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Ænglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per sex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Transegimus mucronum missam
In exortu solis
Coactus est pro nostris gladiis
Valdiofur in bello occumbere.

XII.

Ruit pluvia sanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
Arciter mordebat Loricas
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
Venenate acutus conspersus sudore sanguineo.

XIII.

Tenuimus magica scuta
Alte in pugnæ ludo
Ante Hiadningum sinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat sicut splendidam virginem
In lecto juxta se collocare.

XIV.

Dura venit tempestas Clypeis
Cadaver cecidit in terram
In Nortumbria

" waded in the blood of the slain. When we had num-
" bered twenty years, we lifted our spears on high,

Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus necessum erat fugere
Ex prælio ubi acute
Cassidis campos mordebant gladii
Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria sede osculari.

XV.

Herthiofe evasit fortunatus
In Australibus Orcadibus ipse
Victoriæ in nostris hominibus
Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
Rogvaldus occumbere
Iste venit summus super accipitres
Luctus in gladiorum ludo
Strenue jactabat concussor
Galeæ sanguinis teli.

XVI.

Quilibet jacebat transversim supra alium
Gaudebat pugna lætus
Accipiter ob gladiorum ludum
Non fecit aquilam aut aprum
Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
Marstanus rex jejunis
Fiebat in vedræ sinu
Præda data corvis.

XVII.

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
Mante ante machæram
Virum in mucronum dissidio
Filio meo incidit mature
Gladius juxta cor
Egillus fecit Agnerum spoliatum

" and every where spread our renown. Eight barons " we overcame in the east, before the port of Diminum;

Impertertitum virum vita
Sonuit lancea propre Hamdi
Griseam loricam splendebant vexilla.

XVIII.

Verborum tenaces vidi dissecare
Haut minutim pro lupis
Endili maris ensibus
Erat per Hebdomadæ spacium
Quasi mulieres vinum apportarent
Rubefactæ erant naves
Valde in strepitu armorum
Scissa erat lorica
In Scioldungorum prælio.

XIX.

Pulchricomum vidi crepusculascere
Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
Erat sicut calidum balneum
Vinei vasis nympha portaret
Nos in Ilæ freto
Antiquam Orn rex caderet
Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

XX.

Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis insula
Cum regibus tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
Cecidit multus in rictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut satur inde discederet
Hybernorum sanguis in oceanum
Copiose decidit per mactationis tempus.

" and plentifully we feasted the eagle in that slaughter.
" The warm stream of wounds ran into the ocean. The

XXI.

Alte gladius mordebat Clypeos
Tunc cum aurei coloris
Hasta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs insula
Per secula multum post
Ibi fuit ad gladiorum ludos
Reges processerunt
Rubicundum erat circa insulam
At volans Draco vulnerum

XXII.

Quid est viro forti morte certius
Etsi ipse in armorum nimbo
Adversus collocatus sit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Aquilam ad gladiorum ludum
Meticulosus venit nuspiam
Cordi suo usui.

XXIII.

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax esse in fremitu armorum.

XXIV.

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata sequimur
Rarus transgreditur fata Parcarum
Non destinavi Ellæ

" army fell before us. When we steered our ships
" into the mouth of the Vistula, we sent the Helsin-

Da vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego sanguinem semimortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protrusi
Passim impetravimus tum feris
Escam in Scotiæ sinubus.

XXV.

Hoc ridere me facit semper
Quod Balderi patris scamna
Parata scio in aula
Bibemus cerevisiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio desperabundis
Verbis ad Odini aulam.

XXVI.

Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Aslaugæ gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare
Si exacte scirent
Calamitates nostras
Quem non pauci angues
Venenati me discerpunt
Matrem accepi meis
Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

XXVII.

Valde inclinatur ad hæreditatem
Crudele stat nocumentum a vipera
Anguis inhabitat aulam cordis
Speramus alterius ad Othini
Virgam in Ellæ sanguine
Filiis meis livescet
Sua ira rubescet

" gians to the Hall of Odin. Then did the sword bite. " The waters were all one wound. The earth was " dyed red with the warm stream. The sword rung " upon the coats of mail, and clove the bucklers in " twain. None fled on that day, till among his ships " Heraudus fell. Than him no braver baron cleaves " the sea with ships; a cheerful heart did he ever bring " to the combat. Then the host threw away their " shields, when the uplifted spear flew at the breasts " of heroes. The sword bit the Scarfian rocks; bloody " was the shield in battle, until Rafno the king was " slain. From the heads of warriors the warm sweat " streamed down their armour. The crows around

Non acres juvenes
Sessionem tranquillam facient.

XXVIII.

Habeo quinquagies
Prælia sub signis facta
Ex belli invitatione et semel
Minime putavi hominum
Quod me futurus esset
Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
Alius rex præstantior
Nos Asæ invitabunt
Non est lugenda mors.

XXIX.

Fert animus finire
Invitant me Dysæ
Quas ex Othini aula
Othinus mihi misit
Lætus cerevisiam cum Asis
In summa sede bibam
Vitæ elapsæ sunt horæ
Ridens moriar.

" the Indirian islands had an ample prey. It were
" difficult to single out one among so many deaths. At
" the rising of the sun I beheld the spiers piercing the
" bodies of foes, and the bows throwing forth their
" steel-pointed arrows. Loud roared the swords in the
" plains of Lano.—The virgin long bewailed the
" slaughter of that morning."—In this strain the poet
continues to describe several other military exploits.
The images are not much varied: the noise of arms,
the streaming of blood, and the feasting the birds of
prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two
of his sons in battle; and the lamentation he describes
as made for one of them is very singular. A Grecian
or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins or
nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a
young hero. But, says our Gothic poet, "When
" Rogvaldus was slain, for him mourned all the hawks of
" heaven," as lamenting a benefactor who had so liber-
ally supplied them with prey; "for boldly," as he adds
" in the strife of swords, did the breaker of helmets
" throw the spear of blood."

The poem concludes with sentiments of the highest
bravery and contempt of death. "What is more cer-
" tain to the brave man than death, though amidst the
" storm of swords, he stands always ready to oppose it?
" He only regrets this life who hath never known dis-
" tress. The timorous man allures the devouring eagle
" to the field of battle. The coward, wherever he
" comes, is useless to himself. This I esteem honoura-
" ble, that the youth should advance to the combat
" fairly matched one against another; nor man retreat
" from man. Long was this the warrior's highest
" glory. He who aspires to the love of virgins, ought

"always to be foremost in the roar of arms. It appears
"to me of truth, that we are led by the Fates. Seldom
"can any overcome the appointment of destiny. Little
"did I foresee that Ella * was to have my life in his
"hands, in that day when fainting I concealed my
"blood, and pushed forth my ships into the waves;
"after we had spread a repast for the beasts of prey
"throughout the Scottish bays. But this makes me
"always rejoice that in the halls of our father Balder
"(or Odin) I know there are seats prepared, where, in
"a short time, we shall be drinking ale out of the hollow
"skulls of our enemies. In the house of the mighty
"Odin, no brave man laments death. I come not with
"the voice of despair to Odin's hall. How eagerly
"would all the sons of Aslauga now rush to war, did
"they know the distress of their father, whom a multi-
"tude of venomous serpents tear! I have given to my
"children a mother who hath filled their hearts with
"valour. I am fast approaching to my end. A cruel
"death awaits me from the viper's bite. A snake
"dwells in the midst of my heart. I hope that the sword
"of some of my soul shall yet be stained with the blood
"of Ella. The valiant youths will wax red with anger,
"and will not sit in peace. Fifty and one times have I
"reared the standard in battle. In my youth I learned
"to dye the sword in blood: my hope was then, that no
"king among men would be more renowned than me.
"The goddesses of death will now soon call me; I must
"not mourn my death. Now I end my song. The
"goddesses invite me away; they whom Odin has sent

* This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

"to me from his hall. I will sit upon a lofty seat, and "drink ale joyfully with the goddesses of death. The "hours of my life are run out. I will smile when "I die."

This is such poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a most ferocious spirit. It is wild, harsh, and irregular; but at the same time animated and strong; the style, in the original, full of inversions, and, as we learn from some of Olaus's notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Ossian, a very different scene presents itself. There we find the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominent over fierceness and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the softest feelings, and at the same time elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Ossian, it is like passing from a savage desert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illustrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether distinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the west of Europe; but seem to have had their most full and complete establishment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls

are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their Druids and their bards; the institution of which two orders, was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The druids were their philosophers and priests; the Bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: And both these orders of men seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial *. We must not therefore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a gross and rude nation. They possessed from very remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and lasting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this express testimony, that there flourished among them the study of the most laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whose office it was to sing in heroic verse the gallant actions of illustrious men; and by the Druids, who lived together in colleges or societies, after the Pythagorean manner, and philosophizing upon the highest subjects, asserted the immortality of the human soul.† Though Julius

* Τρία φῦλα τῶν τιμωμενών διαφερόντως ἐςι. Βαρδοι τε καὶ ὀατεις, καὶ Δρῦιδαι. Βαρδοι μεν ὑμνηταὶ καὶ ποιηταὶ. Strabo. lib. iv.

Ἐισι παρ᾽ ἄυτοῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ μελῶν, ὃς Βαρδυς ονομαζυσιν ὅτοι δε μετ᾽ ὀργάνων, ταῖς λυραις ὁμοιων, ὃς μεν ὕμνυσι, ὃς δέ βλασφημυσι. Diodor. Sicul. l. 5.

Τα δε ἀκυσματα ἀυτῶν εισιν ὁι καλύμενοι Βαρδοι. ποιηται δ᾽ ὅτοι τυγχανυσι μετ᾽ ὠδης ἐπαινυς λεγοντες. Posidonius ap. Athenæum, l. 6.

† Per hæc loca (speaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis *viguere studia laudabilium doctrinarum:* inchoata per Bardos at Euhages et Druidas. Et Bardi quidem fortia virorum illustrium

Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does not expressly mention the Bards, yet it is plain, that under the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the Bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that, according to his account, the Druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds too, that such as were initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race*.

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that, amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek Ἀοιδοὶ or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies

facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantitârunt. Eubages vero scrutantes serium et sublimia naturæ pandere conabantur. Inter hos, Druidæ ingeniis celsiores ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit, sodalitiis adstricti consortiis, questionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti sunt; et despanctes humana pronuntiârunt animas immortales. Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. cap 9.

* Vid. Cæsar de Bello Gall. lib. 6.

of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar; and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known that in both these countries, every *Regulus* or chief had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending chiefs; and their persons were held sacred. "Cairbar feared to stretch his sword to the bards, "though his soul was dark. Loose the bards, said his "brother Cathmor, they are the sons of other times. "Their voice shall be heard in other ages, when the "kings of Temora have failed."

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at first sight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it excludes polished manners, it is, however, not inconsistent with generous sentiments and tender affections*. What degrees of friendship, love, and

* Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its most perfect state. Yet their love-songs, which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderness of sentiment may be found in a country, into which the least

heroism, may possibly be found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say. Astonishing instances of them we know from history, have sometimes appeared: and a few characters distinguished by those high qualities, might lay a foundation for a set of manners being introduced into the songs of the bards, more refined, it is probable and exalted, according to the usual poetical licence, than the real manners of the country. In particular, with respect to heroism; the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and sing the praises of heroes. So Lucan;

glimmering of science has never penetrated. To most English readers these songs are well known by the elegant translations of them in the Spectator, No. 366 and 400. I shall subjoin Scheffer's Latin version of one of them, which has the appearance of being strictly literal.

Sol, clarissimum emitte lumen in paludem Orra. Si enisus in summa picearum cacumina scirem me visurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, mea esset flores; omnes suscinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præsecarem, hos virentes ramos. Cursum nubium essem secutus, quæ iter suum instituunt versus paludem Orra, si ad te volare possem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi desunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ, pedesque, anserum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectâsti diu; per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundissimis, corde tuo amicissimo. Quod si longissimè velles effugere, cito tamen te consequerer. Quid firmius validiusve esse potest quam contorti nervi, catenæve ferreæ, quæ durissimè ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput nostrum, mutat cogitationes et sententias. Puerorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos si audirem omnes, a via, a via justa declinarem. Unum est consilium quod capiam; ita scio viam rectiorem me reperturum. Schefferi Lapponia, cap. 25.

Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum
Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardi.

Phars. l. i.

Now when we consider a college or order of men, who cultivating poetry throughout a long series of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroism; who had all the poems and panegyrics which were composed by their predecessors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outstrip those who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their songs with the highest lustre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which distinguish a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the first ideas of heroism occurring to a barbarous people: but no sooner had such ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representations of human perfection, they would be seized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for succeeding bards to work upon and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For such songs as these, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment must have had a very considerable influence in propagating among them real manners, nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even such a hero as Fingal. Especially when we consider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which, in a savage

state, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the songs of bards*.

Having made these remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I shall next consider the particular advantages which Ossian possessed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I just now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other ancestors of Fingal, are spoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable passage, Ossian describes himself as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the songs of bards; and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. "His words," says he, "came only by halves to our ears; they were dark "as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose." Ossian himself, appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius; and susceptible equally of strong and of soft emotions. He was not only a professed bard, educated with care, as we may easily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he shews us himself, in intimate friendship with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior also; and the son of the most renowned hero and prince

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* When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. This cruel policy plainly shows, how great an influence he imagined the songs of these bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the same Celtic race with the Scottish and Irish.

of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumstances uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he sings of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the most illustrious scenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroism in war, and magnificence in peace. For, however rude the magnificence of those times may seem to us, we must remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of distinguished splendour in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a considerable territory; he was enriched with the spoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all respects a personage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of Clans, who lived in the same country, after a more extensive monarchy was established.

The manners of Ossian's age, so far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two dispiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetousness and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amusements, the music of bards and "the feast of shells." The great object pursued by heroic spirits, was "to receive their fame;" that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards; and "to have their name on the four grey "stones." To die, unlamented by a bard, was deemed so great a misfortune, as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. "They wander in thick mists beside

"the reedy lake; but never shall they rise, without "the song, to the dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry had been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder that among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise; a man, who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting, in the course of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that, although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring subsistence. Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce; but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture we find no

traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned except that of navigation and of working in iron*. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners. At their feasts, the heroes prepared their own repast; they sat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whistled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the necessaries of life was known to them only as the spoil of the Roman province; "the gold of the stranger; the lights of "the stranger; the steeds of the stranger, the children "of the rein."

This representation of Ossian's times, must strike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is com-

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* Their skill in navigation need not at all surprize us. Living in the western islands, along the coast, or in a country which is every where intersected with arms of the sea, one of the first objects of their attention, from the earliest time, must have been how to traverse the waters. Hence that knowledge of the stars, so necessary for guiding them by night, of which we find several traces in Ossian's works; particularly in the beautiful description of Cathmor's shield, in the 7th book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early studied. Piratical incursions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the first exploits which distinguished them in the world. Even the savage Americans were, at their first discovery, found to possess the most surprizing skill and dexterity in navigating their immense lakes and rivers.

The description of Cuthullin's chariot, in the 1st book of Fingal, has been objected to by some, as representing greater magnificence than is consistent with the supposed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horse-litter; and the gems mentioned in the description, are no other than the shining stones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the western coast of Scotland.

pared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherson has preserved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are represented as passing the evening in the house of a chief, and each of them separately giving his description of the night. The night scenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the style and manner of Ossian: but he has allowed some images to appear which betray a later period of society. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows seeking shelter, the shepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the shocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempest. Whereas, in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent; no modern allusion drops from him; but every where, the same face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. "The desert," says Fingal, "is enough for me, with "all its woods and deer."

The circle of ideas and transactions is no wider than suits such an age; nor any greater diversity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally display. Valour and bodily strength are the admired qualities. Contentions arise, as is usual among savage nations, from the slightest causes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feast, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, rise to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of sentiment indeed on several occasions, but none of manners. They speak of their past

tions with freedom, boast of their exploits, and sing their own praise. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known nor used. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but striking a shield, or raising a loud cry: And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned as a necessary qualification of a great general; like the βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος of Homer. Of military discipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their armies seem not to have been numerous; their battles were disorderly; and terminated, for the most part, by a personal combat, or wrestling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard "sung the song of peace, and the battle ceased along "the field."

The manner of composition bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of composition were more studied and known; but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise even to abruptness, and leaving several circumstances to be supplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative cast, which, as I before shewed, partly a glowing and undisciplined imagination, partly the sterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early speech of nations; and, in several respects, it carries a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament. It deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms, or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works.

The ideas of men, at first, were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly, almost never expresses himself in the abstract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he saw around him. A public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the storm of the sea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expression, which, whilst it is characteristical of ancient ages, is at the same time highly favourable to descriptive poetry. For the same reasons, personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects, such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications which are so familiar to later poets of fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age.

All these are marks so undoubted, and some of them too so nice and delicate, of the most early times, as put the high antiquity of these poems out of question. Especially when we consider, that if there had been any imposture in this case, it must have been contrived and executed in the highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as up to this period, both by manuscripts, and by the testimony of a multitude of living witnesses, concerning the uncontrovertible tradition of these poems, they can clearly be traced. Now this is a

period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a composition of this kind, which it may not be supposed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thousand years before. To suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the highlands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind, and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society ancienter by a thousand years; one who could support this counterfeited antiquity through such a large collection of poems, without the least inconsistency; and who, possessed of all this genius and art, had at the same time the self-denial of concealing himself, and of ascribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the imposture being detected; 'is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, besides, two other circumstances to be attended to, still of greater weight, if possible, against this hypothesis. One is, the total absence of religious ideas from this work; for which the translator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Ossian. The druidical superstition was, in the days of Ossian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reasons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilst the Christian faith was not yet established. But had it been the work of one to whom the ideas of Christianity were familiar from his infancy, and who had superadded to them also the bigoted superstition of a dark age and country; it is impossible but in some passage or other, the traces of them would

have appeared. The other circumstance is, the entire silence which reigns with respect to all the great clans or families which are now established in the Highlands. The origin of these several clans is known to be very ancient: And it is as well known that there is no passion by which a native Highlander is more distinguished than by attachment to his clan, and jealousy for its honour. That a Highland bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, should have inserted no circumstance which pointed out the rise of his own clan, which ascertained its antiquity, or increased its glory, is, of all suppositions that can be formed, the most improbable; and the silence on this head, amounts to a demonstration that the author lived before any of the present great clans were formed or known.

Assuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems, now under consideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity: I proceed to make some remarks upon their general spirit and strain. The two great characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity, It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole. Ossian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into light and amusing strain; which I readily admit to be no small disadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key note is struck at the beginning, and supported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced, but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all

serious and grave; the scenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea-shore; the mountain shaded with mist; the torrent rushing through a solitary value; the scattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss; all produce a solemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian, an imagination that sports itself, and dresses out gay trifles to please the fancy. His poetry, more, perhaps, than that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, *The poetry of the heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern poets, to please readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flourished; to recal the affecting incidents of his life! to dwell upon his past wars, and loves, and friendships; till, as he expresses it himself, "there comes a voice to Ossian and awakes "his soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they "roll before me with all their deeds;" and under this true poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever pleasing voice of nature.

——— Arte, natura potentior omni.——
Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian's writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or a hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets, to whom we are most accustomed; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at such a

stretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most.

As Homer is, of all the great poets, the one whose manner, and whose times, come the nearest to Ossian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. The Greek has, in several points, a manifest superiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he possesses a larger compass of ideas; has more diversity in his characters: and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of these particulars, Ossian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flourishing; laws instituted; order, discipline, and arts, begun. His field of observation was much larger and more splendid; his knowledge, of course, more extensive; his mind also, it shall be granted, more penetrating. But if Ossian's ideas and objects be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry: The bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over

them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree; and of consequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and sprightly poet than Ossian. You discern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Ossian uniformly maintains the gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great measure to be accounted for from the different situations in which they lived, partly personal, and partly national. Ossian had survived all his friends, and was disposed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But besides this, cheerfulness is one of the many blessings which we owe to formed society. The solitary wild state is always a serious one. Bating the sudden and violent bursts of mirth, which sometimes break forth at their dances and feasts, the savage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be also remarked in Ossian. On all occasions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a description than is just sufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his descriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumstances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their personages frequently speaking before us. But Ossian is concise and rapid in his speeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had also some portion of the Greek loquacity. His speeches indeed are highly characteristical; and to them we are much indebted for that ad-

mirable display he has given of human nature. Yet if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them are trifling; and some of them plainly unseasonable. Both poets are eminently sublime; but a difference may be remarked in the species of their sublimity. Homer's sublimity is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates, and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is most sublime in actions and battles; Ossian in description and sentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuses to exert it, has great power; but Ossian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderness far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to seize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is indeed a surprizing circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, and not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.

After these general observations on the genius and spirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view and more accurate examination of his works; and as Fingal is the first great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuse the title of an epic poem to Fingal, because it is not, in every little particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in

so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment on finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But, our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle, with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an Epic poem. Hence his whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer. Homer and Ossian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle, concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action which is the ground-work of the poem, should be one, complete, and great; that it should be feigned, not merely historical; that it should be enlivened with characters and manners, and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of these, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Bossu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illustrate some moral truth. The poet, says this critic, must begin with fixing on some maxim or instruction which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æsop's,

wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus settled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary history for names and incidents, to give his fable some air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion enter into the mind of a critic. We may safely pronounce; that he who should compose an epic poem after this manner, who should first lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his personages and actors, might deliver indeed very sound instruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the least doubt that the first object which strikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or subject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any subject a poet can choose for such a work, but will afford some general moral instruction. An epic poem is by its nature one of the most moral of all poetical compositions: but its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to some common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the story. It arises from the admiration of heroic actions, which such a composition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raise, whilst we read it; from the happy impressions which all the parts separately as well as the whole together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be still insisted on, Fingal obviously furnishes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That Wisdom and bravery always triumph over brutal force: or another, nobler still; That the most complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generosity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the Epic action, which, of all Aristotle's

rules, is the chief and most material, is so strictly preserved in Fingal, that it must be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what arises from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic justly censures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterprise, the deliverance of Ireland from the invasion of Swaran: An enterprise, which has surely the full Heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a constant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: And as the action is one and great, so it is an entire or complete action. For we find, as the critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a Nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuthullin's rashness and bad success; those difficulties gradually surmounted; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to Epic Poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in Fingal, than in almost any other Epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The Autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action; and from beginning to end the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much shorter than in the Iliad or Æneid, but sure there may be shorter as well as longer Heroic Poems; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly that the Epic composition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the Iliad lasts only forty-seven days, whilst that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

> Semper ad eventum festinat, et in medias res.
> Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit——
> Nec gemino bellum Trojanum auditur ab ovo.
>
> De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muse, for he acknowledges none; but his occasional addresses to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muse. He sets out with no formal proposition of his subject; but the subject naturally and easily unfolds itself; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the situation of Cuthullin, and the arrival of a scout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is presently made of Fingal, and of the expected assistance from the ships of the lonely isle, in order to give further light to the subject. For the poet often shews his address in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations that are raised, and the extreme magnificence fully answering these expectations, with which the hero is at length presented to us, are all worked up with such skilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the most refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been universally admired. Ossian certainly shews no less art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be

more happily imagined for this purpose than the whole management of the last battle, wherein Gaul the son of Morni, had besought Fingal to retire, and to leave to him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generosity of the king in agreeing to this proposal;' the majesty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his sword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingness to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in person to their assistance, first sending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at last, when the danger becomes more pressing, his rising in his might, and interposing like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumstances contrived with so much art as plainly discover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractised in heroic poetry.

The story which is the foundation of the Iliad is in itself as simple as that of Fingal. A quarrel arises between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female slave; on which Achilles, apprehending himself to be injured, withdraws his assistance from the rest of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great distress, and beseech him to be reconciled to them. He refuses to fight for them in person, but sends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being slain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The subject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuthullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for assistance to Fingal, who reigned in the opposite coast of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by rash counsel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated;

he retreats; and desponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for some time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once saved his life, makes him dismiss him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his story with a much greater variety of particulars than Ossian; and in this has shewn a compass of invention superior to that of the other poet. But it must not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumstantial, his incidents however are less diversified in kind than those of Ossian. War and bloodshed reign throughout the Iliad; and, notwithstanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is so much uniformity in his subjects, that there are few readers, who, before the close, are not tired with perpetual fighting. Whereas in Ossian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diversity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroism, with love and friendship, of martial with tender scenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The Episodes too, have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: consisting of the songs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. These songs are not introduced at random; if you except the Episode of Duchom-mar and Morna, in the first book, which, though beautiful, is more unartful than any of the rest; they have always some particular relation to the actor who is interested, or to the events which are going on; and, whilst they vary the scene, they preserve a sufficient connection with the main subject, by the fitness and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca influences some cir-

cumstances of the poem, particularly the honourable dismission of Swaran at the end; it was necessary that we should be let into this part of the hero's story. But as it lay without the compass of the present action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an Episode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety as if Aristotle himself had directed the plan, has contrived an Episode for this purpose in the song of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The conclusion of the poem is strictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleasing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the consolation of Cuthullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, soothe the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that passage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repose, which critics require as the proper termination of the Epic work. "Thus they passed "the night in song, and brought back the morning "with joy. Fingal arose on the heath; and shook his "glittering spear in his hand. He moved first towards "the plains of Lena; and we followed like a ridge of "fire. Spread the sail, said the king of Morven, and "catch the winds that pour from Lena. We rose on "the wave with songs; and rushed with joy through "the foam of the ocean."—So much for the unity and general conduct of the Epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the subject which Aristotle requires, that it should be feigned not historical, he must not be understood so strictly as if he meant to exclude all subjects which have any foundation in truth. For such exclusion would both be unreasonable in itself, and, what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to

have founded his Iliad on historical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Aristotle means no more than that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and useful fictions; to copy nature, as he himself explains it, like painters, who preserve a likeness, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Ossian has followed this course, and, building upon true history, has sufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be questioned by most readers. At the same time, the foundation which those facts and characters had in truth, and the share which the poet himself had in the transactions which he records, must be considered as no small advantage to his work. For truth makes an impression on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever so strong, relates any events so feelingly as those in which he has been interested; paints any scene so naturally as one which he has seen; or draws any characters in such strong colours as those which he has personally known. It is considered as an advantage of the Epic subject to be taken from a period so distant, as by being involved in the darkness of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Ossian's subject may at first view appear unfavourable in this respect, as being taken from his own times, yet, when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been transacted in another country, at the distance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the stage; we shall find the objection in a great measure obviated. In

so rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was loose, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural representations of human characters in an Epic Poem is highly essential to its merit; and, in respect of this, there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Ossian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at least, if not superior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the display of human nature, which the simple occurrences of his times could be expected to furnish. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but, on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly distinguished, but sometimes artfully contrasted, so as to illustrate each other. Ossian's heroes are, like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like those of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For instance, the prudent, the sedate, the modest, and circumspect Connal, is finely opposed to the presumptuous, rash, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuthullin into action by his temerity; and when he sees the bad effect of his counsels, he will not survive the disgrace. Connal, like another Ulysses, attends Cuthullin to his retreat, counsels, and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-spirited Swaran is admirably contrasted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oscar is a favourite one throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuosity in the day of action; his passion

for fame; his submission to his father; his tenderness for Malvina; are the strokes of a masterly pencil: The strokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Ossian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us through the whole work a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuthullin is a hero of the highest class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress; and after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius that he durst adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuthullin should be only an inferior personage; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuthullin rises above the rest.

Here indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled: For we may boldly defy all antiquity to shew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a secondary personage in the Iliad, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal; who not only, in this Epic Poem, but in Temora, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him insulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel

taunts, and telling him, when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the vultures*. Whereas in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished, on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes †; full of affection to his children; full of concern about his friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is the universal protector of the distressed; "None ever went sad from Fingal." "O Oscar! bend the strong in arms; but spare the "feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides against "the foes of thy people; but like the gale that moves "the grass, to those who ask thine aid. So Trenmor "lived; such Trathal was; and such has Fingal been. "My arm was the support of the injured; the weak "rested behind the lightning of my steel." These

* Iliad xvi. 830. Il. xvii. 127.

† When he commands his sons, after Swaran is taken prisoner, to "pursue the rest of Lochlin, over the heath of Lena; that no "vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inis-"tore;" he means not assuredly, as some have misrepresented him, to order a general slaughter of the foes, and to prevent their saving themselves by flight; but, like a wise general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any fleet against him or his allies.

were the maxims of true heroism, to which he formed his grandson. His fame is represented as every where spread; the greatest heroes acknowledge his superiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the highest encomium that can be bestowed on one whom the poet would most exalt, is to say, that his soul was like the soul of Fingal.

To do justice to the poet's merit, in supporting such a character as this, I must observe, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in such a manner, as to render it distinct and affecting to the mind. Some strokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what usually give us the most clear view, and the most sensible impression of a character; because they present to us a man, such as we have seen; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and describe a faultless hero, they, for the most part, set before us a sort of vague undistinguishable character, such as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realise to itself, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated, insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man; a character which touches and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many cir-

cumstance, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrative of his past exploits; he is venerable with the grey locks of age; he is frequently disposed to moralise, like an old man, on human vanity and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this, than may at first be imagined. For youth and old age, are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which most critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description. No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world, into a fantastic, visionary region; and loses that weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can

make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners, are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws these too much from view; or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases: He must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature.

In these respects, Ossian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the same course with Homer. For it is perfectly absurd to imagine, as some critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in consequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no such refining genius. He found the traditionary stories on which he built his Iliad, mingled with popular legends concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted these because they amused the fancy. Ossian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits: It is likely he believed them himself; and he introduced them, because they gave his poems that solemn and marvellous cast, which suited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; because it was the only intervention of supernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; because it did not interfere

in the least with the proper display of human characters and actions; because it had less of the incredible, than most other kinds of poetical machinery; and because it served to diversify the scene, and to heighten the subject by an awful grandeur, which is the great design of machinery.

As Ossian's mythology is peculiar to himself, and makes a considerable figure in his other poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make some observations on it, independent of its subserviency to epic composition. It turns, for the most part, on the appearances of departed spirits. These, consonantly to the notions of every rude age, are represented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be visible or invisible at pleasure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a separate state, they retain the same dispositions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and pursue deer formed of clouds. The ghosts of departed bards continue to sing. The ghosts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They rest "together in their caves, and talk of mortal men. "Their songs are of other worlds. They come some-"times to the ear of rest, and raise their feeble voice." All this presents to us much the same set of ideas, concerning spirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the Odyssey, where Ulysses visits the regions of the dead: and in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghost of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vanishes precisely like one of Ossian's, emitting a shrill, feeble cry, and melting away like smoke.

But though Homer's and Ossian's ideas concerning

ghosts were of the same nature, we cannot but observe, that Ossian's ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier colours than those of Homer. Ossian describes ghosts with all the particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it. He calls up those awful and tremendous ideas which the

——— *Simulacra modis pallentia miris*

are fitted to raise in the human mind; and which, in Shakespeare's style, "harrow up the soul." Crugal's ghost, in particular, in the beginning of the second book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, described by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Most poets would have contented themselves with telling us, that he resembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dress were the same, only his face more pale and sad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Ossian sets before our eyes a spirit from the invisible world, distinguished by all those features, which a strong astonished imagination would give to a ghost. "A dark-red stream of "fire comes down from the hill. Crugal sat upon the "beam; he that lately fell by the hand of Swaran, "striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the "beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the "clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying "flames. Dark is the wound of his breast.—The stars "dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was "like the sound of a distant stream." The circumstance of the stars being beheld, "dim-twinkling through his "form," is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the most lively impression of his thin and shadowy substance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed,

and the speech put into his mouth, are full of that solemn and awful sublimity, which suits the subject. "Dim, and in tears, he stood and stretched his pale "hand over the hero. Faintly he raised his feeble "voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego.—My ghost, O "Connal! is on my native hills; but my corse is on the "sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never talk with Crugal, "or find his lone steps in the heath. I am light as the "blast of Cromla; and I move like the shadow of mist. "Connal, son of Colgar! I see the dark cloud of death. "It hovers over the plains of Lena. The sons of green "Erin shall fall. Remove from the field of ghosts.— "Like the darkened moon he retired in the midst of "the whistling blast."

Several other appearances of spirits might be pointed out, as among the most sublime passages of Ossian's poetry. The circumstances of them are considerably diversified; and the scenery always suited to the occasion. "Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors "of night set on the heath before him. A distant tor- "rent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through "aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim "and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on "the heath. Oscar drew his sword."——Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful scene that is to follow. "Trenmor came from his hill, at the voice "of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the "stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of "the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. "His sword is a green meteor, half-extinguished. His "face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice "over the hero: And thrice, the winds of the night "roared around. Many were his words to Oscar.—

"He slowly vanished like a mist that melts on the "sunny hill." To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble description in the book of Job: "In thoughts from the visions of the night, "when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, "and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. "Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my "flesh stood up. It stood still; but I could not "discern the form thereof. An image was before mine "eyes. There was silence; and I heard a voice— "Shall mortal man be more just than God?"*

As Ossian's supernatural beings are described with a surprising force of imagination, so they are introduced with propriety. We have only three Ghosts in Fingal; That of Crugal, which comes to warn the host of impending destruction, and to advise them to save themselves by retreat; that of Evirallin, the spouse of Ossian, which calls him to rise and rescue their son from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, just before the last engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching destruction of her kinsmen and people. In the other poems, ghosts sometimes appear when invoked to foretel futurity; frequently, according to the notions of these times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death, to those whom they visit; sometimes they inform their friends at a distance, of their own death; and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the scenery on some great and solemn occasion. "A hundred oaks burn to the "wind; and faint light gleams over the heath. The

* Job, iv. 13.—17.

" ghosts of Ardven pass through the beam; and shew
" their dim and distant forms. Comala is half-unseen
" on her meteor; and Hidallan is sullen and dim."--
" The awful faces of other times, looked from the
" clouds of Crona."—" Ferguth! I saw the ghost of
" night. Silent he stood on that bank; his robe of
" mist flew on the wind. I could behold his tears.
" An aged man he seemed, and full of thought."

The ghosts of strangers mingle not with those of the natives. " She is seen; but not like the daughters " of the hill. Her robes are from the stranger's land; " and she is still alone." When the ghost of one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is still preserved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghost, in the poem entitled, The Death of Cuthullin. He seems to forebode Cuthullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuthullin reproaches him for supposing that he could be intimidated by such prognostics. " Why dost thou " bend thy dark eyes on me, ghost of the car-borne " Calmar? Would'st thou frighten me, O Matha's " son! from the battles of Cormac? Thy hand was " not feeble in war; neither was thy voice for peace. " How art thou changed, chief of Lara! if now thou " dost advise to fly! Retire thou to thy cave: Thou " art not Calmar's ghost: He delighted in battle; and " his arm was like the thunder of heaven." Calmar makes no return to this seeming reproach: But, " He " retired in his blast with joy; for he had heard the " voice of his praise." This is precisely the ghost of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithstanding all the dissatisfaction he expresses with his state in the region of the dead, as soon as he had heard his son Neoptolemus

praised for his gallant behaviour, strode away with silent joy to rejoin the rest of the shades*.

It is a great advantage of Ossian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of most other ancient poets; which of course is apt to seem ridiculous, after the superstitions have passed away on which it was founded. Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amusing; but far from being always supported with proper dignity. The indecent squabbles among his gods, surely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Ossian's machinery has dignity upon all occasions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper; because coincident with the strain and spirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the subjects on which Ossian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always solemn, it is not, however, always dreary or dismal; it is enlivened, as much as the subject would permit, by those pleasant and beautiful appearances, which he sometimes introduces, of the spirits of the hill. These are gentle spirits; descending on sun-beams, fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices sweet; and their visits to men propitious. The greatest praise that can be given, to the beauty of a living woman, is to say, " She is fair as the ghost of " the hill; when it moves in a sun-beam at noon, over

* Odyss. Lib. 11.

"the silence of Morven." "The hunter shall hear
"my voice from his booth. He shall fear, but love
"my voice. For sweet shall my voice be for my
"friends; for pleasant were they to me."

Besides ghosts, or the spirits of departed men, we find in Ossian some instances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a superior nature to ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and storms, and pour them on the land of the stranger; to overturn forests, and to send death among the people. We have prodigies too; a shower of blood; and when some disaster is befalling at a distance, the sound of death heard on the strings of Ossian's harp: all perfectly consonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a superstitious imagination in all countries. The description of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the ascent of Malvina into it, deserves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear transcribing the passage, as it must have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Ossian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, opposed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the speech of that awful spirit; the wound which he receives, and the shriek which he sends forth, "as rolled into himself, he rose upon the wind;" are full of the most amazing and terrible majesty. I know no passage more sublime in the writings of any uninspired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandise the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it so

unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at first be thought. According to the notions of those times, supernatural beings were material, and, consequently, vulnerable. The spirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the stone of his power; he plainly considered him as the god of his enemies only; as a local deity, whose dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his submission. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the gods whom that chief himself worshipped, Ossian surely is pardonable for making his hero superior to the god of a foreign territory*.

* The scene of this encounter of Fingal with the spirit of Loda is laid in Inistore, or the islands of Orkney: and in the description of Fingal's landing there, it is said, " A rock bends along " the coast with all its echoing wood. On the top is the cir- " cle of Loda, with the mossy stone of power." In confirmation of Ossian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in these islands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars, and circles of stones, still remaining, known by the name of the stones and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which some degree of superstitious regard is annexed to this day. These islands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Danish dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet some remains among the natives, is called the Norse; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the superstitions of the inhabitants are quite distinct from those of the Highlands and western isles of Scotland. Their ancient songs, too, are of a different strain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations

Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the auther discovered some knowledge of a Supreme Being. Although his silence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious translator in a very probable manner, yet still it must be held a considerable disadvantage to the poetry. For the most august and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry are derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe: And hence the invocation of a Supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers who are conceived as presiding over human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry, is a sensible blank in it; the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of Fingal, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of Temora, the other Epic Poem. Many of the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of Temora, requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

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from the dead, which were the favourite subjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them, of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the western islands.

The scene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince, an undertaking worthy of the justice and heroism of the great Fingal. The action is one and complete. The poem opens with the descent of Fingal on the coast, and the consultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cause of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an episode in the first book. In the progress of the poem, three battles are described, which rise in their importance above one another; the success is various, and the issue for some time doubtful; till at last, Fingal brought into distress, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his son Fillan, assumes the command himself, and having slain the Irish king in single combat, restores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps less fire than the other epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderness, and more magnificence. The reigning idea, so often presented to us, of "Fingal in the last of his "fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble conclusion be thought of, than the aged hero, after so many successful achievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the solemnities of those times resigning his spear to his son. The events are less crouded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly displayed; we are let into the transactions of both hosts; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The

still pathetic, and the romantic scenery of several of the night adventures, so remarkably suited to Ossian's genius, occasion a fine diversity in the poem; and are happily contrasted with the military operations of the day.

In most of our author's poems the horrors of war are softened by intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In Fingal, these are introduced as episodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the most conspicuous beauties of that poem. The distress of Sulmalla, disguised and unknown among strangers, her tender and anxious concern for the safety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he first discovers her, his struggles to conceal and suppress his passion, lest it should unman him in the midst of war, though "his soul poured forth in secret, when he beheld "her fearful eye;" and the last interview between them, when overcome by her tenderness, he lets her know he had discovered her, and confesses his passion; are all wrought up with the most exquisite sensibility and delicacy.

Besides the characters which appeared in Fingal, several new ones are here introduced; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheless diversified in a sensible and striking manner. Foldath, for instance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a savage chieftain: Bold, and daring, but presumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is distinguished on his first appearance, as the friend of the

tyrant Cairbar; "His stride is haughty; his red eye "rolls in wrath." In his person and whole deportment, he is contrasted with the mild and wise Hidalla, another leader of the same army, on whose humanity and gentleness he looks with great contempt. He professedly delights in strife and blood. He insults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counsels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his schemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral song to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghost, was, in those days considered as the greatest barbarity. Fierce to the last, he comforts himself in his dying moments, with thinking that his ghost shall often leave its blast to rejoice over the graves of those he had slain. Yet Ossian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, some tender circumstances; by the moving description of his daughter Dardulena, the last of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is distinguished by the most humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hospitality to strangers; open to every generous sentiment, and to every soft and compassionate feeling. He is so amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it so as to make Cathmor himself indirectly acknowledge Fingal's superiority, and to appear somewhat apprehensive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Ossian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes,

Cuthullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, sensibly distinguished each of their characters. Cuthullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wise and great, retaining an ascendant peculiar to himself in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one most highly finished, is Fillan. His character is of that sort, for which Ossian shews a particular fondness; an eager, fervent, young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthusiasm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had sketched this in the description of his own son Oscar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is so consonant to the epic strain, though, so far as I remember, not placed in such a conspicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Ossian's management of it in this instance.

Fillan was the youngest of all the sons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oscar, by whose fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally suppose his ambition to have been highly stimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is described as more rash and fiery. His first appearance is soon after Oscar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a conversation with his brother Ossian, on that occasion, we learn that it was not long since he began to lift the spear. "Few are the "marks of my sword in battle; but my soul is fire." He is with some difficulty restrained by Ossian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of signalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked "my sword; I go forth with the crowd; I return

"without my fame." Soon after, when Fingal, according to custom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was standing forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is presented in the following most picturesque and natural attitude. "On his spear stood the son of Clatho, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes to Fingal: "his voice thrice failed him as he spoke. Fillan could "not boast of battles; at once he strode away. Bent "over a distant stream he stood; the tear hung in "his eye. He struck, at times, the thistle's head, "with his inverted spear." No less natural and beautiful is the description of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occasion. "Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-"long he beheld his son. He beheld him with "bursting joy. He hid the big tear with his locks, "and turned amidst his crowded soul." The command, for that day being given to Gaul, Fillan rushes amidst the thickest of the foe, saves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and distinguishes himself so in battle, that "the days of old "return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown "of his son. As the sun rejoices from the cloud, "over the tree his beams have raised, whilst it shakes "its lonely head on the heath, so joyful is the king "over Fillan." Sedate, however, and wise, he mixes the praise which he bestows on him with some reprehension of his rashness. "My son, I saw thy deeds, "and my soul was glad. Thou art brave, son of "Clatho, but headlong in the strife. So did not "Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let "thy people be a ridge behind thee; they are thy

"strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long re-
"nowned, and behold the tombs of thy fathers."

On the next day, the greatest and the last of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the host to battle. Fingal's speech to his troops on this occasion is full of noble sentiment; and, where he recommends his son to their care, extremely touching. "A young beam is before you; few are his steps to "war. They are few, but he is valiant; defend my "dark-haired son. Bring him back with joy; here-"after he may stand alone. His form is like his "fathers; his soul is a flame of their fire." When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero; who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath, the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian, if any where, excels himself. Foldath being slain, and a general rout begun, there was no resource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. "Wide spreading over echoing Lubar, "the flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung for-"ward on their steps; and strewed the heath with dead. "Fingal rejoiced over his son.—— Blue-shielded Cath-"mor rose.———Son of Alpin, bring the harp! "Give Fillan's praise to the wind; raise high his praise "in my hall, while yet he shines in war. Leave, blue-"eyed Clatho! leave thy hall; behold that early beam "of thine! The host is withered in its course. No "farther look —— it is dark —— light-trembling

"from the harp, strike, virgins! strike the sound."
The sudden interruption, and suspense of the narration on Cathmor's rising from his hill, the abrupt bursting into the praise of Fillan, and the passionate apostrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to interest us in Fillan's danger, and the whole is heightened by the immediate following simile, one of the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which, if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent subject of admiration to critics; "Fillan is like a spirit of "heaven, that descends from the skirt of his blast. The "troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave "to wave. His path kindles behind him; islands shake "their heads on the heaving seas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhausted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or, in Ossian's style, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too interesting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the rising of Cathmor, and the danger of his son. But what shall he do? Shall Fingal rise to his aid, and take "the sword of Luna? what then shall become of thy "fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine "eyes from Fingal, daughter of Inistore! I shall not "quench thy early beam. No cloud of mine shall rise, "my son, upon thy soul of fire."—Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the safety, of his son, he withdraws from the sight of the engagement; and dispatches Ossian in haste to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction: "Father of Oscar!" addressing him by a title which on this occasion has the highest propriety, "Father of Oscar! lift the spear;

"defend the young in arms. But conceal thy steps
"from Fillan's eyes. He must not know that I doubt
"his steel." Ossian arrived too late. But unwilling to
describe Fillan vanquished, the poet suppresses all the
circumstances of the combat with Cathmor; and only
shews us the dying hero. We see him animated to the
end with the same martial and ardent spirit; breathing
his last in bitter regret for being so early cut off from
the field of glory. "Ossian, lay me in that hollow
"rock. Raise no stone above me, lest one should ask
"about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields;
"fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone, send joy
"to my flying soul. Why should the bard know where
"dwells the early-fallen Fillan." He who, after tracing
the circumstances of this story, shall deny that our bard
is possessed of high sentiment and high art, must be
strangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the story
of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a similar kind; and after
all the praise he may justly bestow on the elegant and
finished description of that amiable author, let him say
which of the two poets unfold most of the human soul.
I waive insisting on any more of the particulars in Temora;
as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the
genius and spirit of Ossian's poetry than to dwell on all
his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting
works of such length as Fingal and Temora, distinguish
them from the other poems in this collection. The
smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no
less eminent. They are historical poems, generally of
the elegiac kind; and plainly discover themselves to be
the work of the same author. One consistent face of
manners is every where presented to us; one spirit of

poetry reigns; the masterly hand of Ossian appears throughout; the same rapid and animated style; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart. Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject, which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of Fingal. The same race of heroes whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuthullin, Oscar, Connal, and Gaul, return again upon the stage; and Fingal himself is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion with equal magnificence, nay rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son Oscar, furnish the finest poetical situations that fancy could devise for that tender pathetic which reigns in Ossian's poetry.

On each of these poems there might be room for separate observations, with regard to the conduct and disposition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the descriptions and sentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly finished piece. The main story is very properly introduced by Clessammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's song of mourning over Moina; in which Ossian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to distinguish him for being an eminent poet as well as warrior. Fingal's song upon this occasion, when "his thousand Bards leaned forwards from their seats, to hear the voice of the King," is inferior to no passage in the whole book: and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the seriousness,

no less than the sublimity of the strain, is peculiarly suited to the Hero's character. In Darthula, are assembled almost all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, sons, and brothers, the distress of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful address to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the transition from thence to the subject, most happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The story is regular, dramatic, interesting to the last. He who can read it without emotion may congratulate himself, if he pleases, upon being completely armed against sympathetic sorrow. As Fingal had no occasion of appearing in the action of this poem, Ossian makes a very artful transition from his narration, to what was passing in the halls of Selma. The sound heard there on the strings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shews on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghosts of their fathers, to receive the heroes falling in a distant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increase the solemnity, and to diversify the scenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the most sublime dignity; and has this advantage, of being more cheerful in the subject, and more happy in the catastrophe, than most of the other poems: Though tempered at the same time with episodes in that strain of tender melancholy which seems to have been the great delight of Ossian and the Bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly distinguished by high generosity of sentiment. This is carried so far, particularly in the refusal of Gaul, on one side, to take the advantage of a sleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers

the two young warriors, as to recall into one's mind the manners of chivalry; some resemblance to which may perhaps be suggested by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took rise in an age and country too remote from those of Ossian, to admit the suspicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real existence, the same military enthusiasm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Ossian, that is, in the infancy of a rising state, through the operation of the same cause, very naturally produce effects of the same kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal system existing only in romance, it will not be thought surprising, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic Bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners should be found among them, as much, at least, as among the *Trobadores*, or strolling Provencal Bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whose songs, it is said, first gave rise to those romantic ideas of heroism, which for so long a time enchanted Europe*. Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love scenes have native tenderness, without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which resemble the most those of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war disguised in the armour of men; and these are so managed as to produce, in the discovery, several of the most interesting situations; one

* Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum Romanensium.

beautiful instance of which may be seen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthon and Colmal.

Oithona presents a situation of a different nature. In the absence of her lover Gaul, she had been carried off and ravished by Dun-rommath. Gaul discovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the sentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occasion, are described with such tender and exquisite propriety, as does the greatest honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author; and would have been admired in any poet of the most refined age. The conduct of Croma must strike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the succeeding poem. She is therefore introduced in person; "she "has heard a voice in a dream; she feels the fluttering "of her soul;" and in a most moving lamentation addressed to her beloved Oscar, she sings her own Death-song. Nothing could be calculated with more art to soothe and comfort her than the story which Ossian relates. In the young and brave Fovargormo, another Oscar is introduced; his praises are sung; and the happiness is set before her of those who die in their youth, "when their renown is around them; "before the feeble behold them in the hall, and smile "at their trembling hands."

But no where does Ossian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the conclusion of his songs, "The last sound of the voice "of Cona."

> Qualis olor noto positurus littore vitam,
> Ingemit, et mæstis mulcens concentibus auras
> Præsago queritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably suited to the subject. Every thing is full of that invisible world, into which the aged Bard believes himself now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal presents itself to his view; "he sees the cloud that shall receive his ghost; "he beholds the mist that shall form his robe when he "appears on his hill;" and all the natural objects around him seem to carry the presages of death. "The "thistle shakes its beard to the wind. The flower "hangs its heavy head; it seems to say, I am covered "with the drops of heaven; the time of my departure "is near, and the blast that shall scatter my leaves." Malvina's death is hinted to him in the most delicate manner by the son of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheosis, or ascent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the story which follows from the mention which Ossian supposes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the highest spirit of poetry. "And dost "thou remember Ossian, O Toscar, son of Comloch? "The battles of our youth were many; our swords "went together to the field." Nothing could be more proper than to end his songs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now so full; and who, from first to last, had been such a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The scene of most of Ossian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coast of Ireland opposite to the territories of Fingal. When the scene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from those of Ossian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, customs, and religion of both nations were the same. They had

been separated from one another, by migration, only a few generations, as it should seem, before our poet's age; and they still maintained a close and frequent intercourse. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coast, or to the islands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sul-malla of Lumon, and Cathloda, the case is quite altered. Those countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic descent, who in their manners and relious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Ossian. His descriptions bear the native marks of one who was present in the expeditions which he relates, and who describes what he had seen with his own eyes. No sooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the islands of Inistore, than we perceive that we are in a foreigh region. New objects begin to appear. We meet everywhere with the stones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and inchantments, for which it is well known those northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the "murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, who "called the forms of night to aid them in their war;" whilst the Caledonian chiefs, who assisted them, are described as standing at a distance, heedless of their rites. That ferocity of manners which distinguished those notions, also becomes conspicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar savageness; even their women are bloody and fierce. The spirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern scalder whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again.

"The hawks," Ossian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs say, "rush from all their winds; they are wont "to trace my course. We rejoiced three days above "the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They "came from all their winds, to feast on the foes of "Annir."

Dismissing now the separate consideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make some observations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Description, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always distinguished by his talent for description*. A second-rate writer discerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to describe. His conceptions of it are vague and loose; his expressions feeble; and of course the object is presented to us indistinctly and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes; he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which first receives a strong impression of the object; and then, by a proper selection of capital picturesque circumstances employed in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Ossian possesses this descriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his descriptions produce upon the imaginations of those who read him with any degree of attention and taste. Few poets are more interesting. We contract an inti-

* See the rules of poetical description excellently illustrated by Lord Kaims, in his Elements of Criticism, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of narration and description.

mate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country, become familiar: we even think we could draw the figure of his ghosts. In a word, whilst reading him we are transported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. Such, for instance, as the scenery with which Temora opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there presented to us; the description of the young prince Cormac, in the same book; and the ruins of Balclutha in Cartho. "I "have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were deso"late. The fire had resounded in the halls; and the "voice of the people is heard no more. The stream "of Clutha was removed from its place by the fall of "the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head: "The moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out "from the windows; the rank grass of the wall waved "round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina; "silence is in the house of her fathers." Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child: "Have "not seen the fallen Balclutha? And shall I feast "with Comhal's son? Comhal! who threw his fire in "the midst of my father's hall! I was young, and knew "not the cause why the virgins wept. The columns of "smoke pleased mine eye, when they arose above my "walls! I often looked back with gladness, when my "friends fled above the hill. But when the years of "my youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen "walls. My sigh arose with the morning; and my

"tears descended with night. Shall I not fight, I said "to my soul, against the children of my foes? And "I will fight, O Bard! I feel the strength of my soul." In the same poem, the assembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of some impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is described with so many picturesque circumstances, that one imagines himself present in the assembly. "The king alone "beheld the terrible sight, and he foresaw the death of "his people. He came in silence to his hall, and took "his father's spear; the mail rattled on his breast. "The heroes rose around. They looked in silence on "each other, marking the eyes of Fingal. They saw "the battle in his face: A thousand shields are placed "at once on their arms; and they drew a thousand "swords. The hall of Selma brightened around. The "clang of arms ascends. The grey dogs howl in their "place. No word is among the mighty chiefs. Each "marked the eyes of the king; and half-assumed his "spear.".

It has been objected to Ossian, that his descriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much less diversified by circumstances than those of Homer. This is in some measure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where so much displayed as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little history pieces he gives of the persons slain. Nor indeed, with regard to the talent of description, can too much be said in praise of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are those of nature. But Ossian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects, rather than to

amuse himself with particulars of less importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero; but that of a private man seldom stopped his rapid course. Homer's genius was more comprehensive than Ossian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into description. Ossian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itself was the highest of all, the region of the pathetic and sublime.

We must not imagine, however, that Ossian's battles consist only of general indistinct description. Such beautiful incidents are sometimes introduced, and the circumstances of the persons slain so much diversified, as shew that he could have embellished his military scenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. "One man "is stretched in the dust of his native land; he fell, "where often he had spread the feast, and often raised "the voice of the harp." The maid of Inisore is introduced, in a moving apostrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, "as rolled in the dust he lifted "his faint eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is slain by night, is heard "hissing on the half-extinguished oak," which had been kindled for giving light: Another, climbing a tree to escape from his foe, is pierced by his spear from behind; "shrieking, panting he fell; whilst "moss and withered branches pursue his fall, and strew "the blue arms of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: "I saw Gaul in his armour, and my soul "was mixed with his: For the fire of the battle was

" in his eyes; he looked to the foe with joy. We spoke
" the words of friendship in secret; and the lightning
" of our swords poured together. We drew them
" behind the wood, and tried the strength of our arms
" on the empty air."

Ossian is always concise in his descriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great mistake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended style, is of advantage to description. On the contrary, such a diffuse manner for the most part weakens it. Any one redundant circumstance is a nuisance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indistinct. "Obstat," as Quintilian says with regard to style, "quicquid non adjuvat." To be concise in description, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No description that rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. But at the same time, no strong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones. By the happy choice of some one, or a few that are the most striking, it presents the image more complete, shews us more at one glance than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its objects round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all prose writers the most concise. He has even a degree of abruptness resembling our author: Yet no writer is more eminent for lively description. When Fingal after having conquered the haughty Swaran, proposes to dismiss him with honour: "Raise to-morrow thy white sails to the wind, thou "brother of Agandecca!" He conveys, by thus addressing his enemy, a stronger impression of the emo-

tions then passing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been spent in describing the conflict between resentment against Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the most full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words: "His shield is marked with the "strokes of battle; his red eye despises danger." When Oscar, left alone, was surrounded by foes, "he "stood," it is said, "growing in his place, like the "flood of the narrow vale;" a happy representation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midst of danger, seems to increase in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the sudden rising of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumstances of domestic sorrow occasioned by a young warrior's first going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by these words: "Calmar leaned on his father's spear; that spear which he "brought from Lara's hall, when the soul of his mo-"ther was sad."

The conciseness of Ossian's descriptions is the more proper on account of his subjects. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes may, without any disadvantage, be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in these. The description may be weakened by being diffuse, yet, notwithstanding, may be beautiful still. Whereas, with respect to grand, solemn, and pathetic subjects, which are Ossian's chief field, the case is very different. In these, energy is above all things required. The imagination must be seized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.

But Ossian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the sublime and pathetic, was not confined to it. In subjects also of grace and delicacy, he discovers the hand of a master. Take for an example the following elegant description of Agandecca, wherein the tenderness of Tibullus seems united with the majesty of Virgil. "The daughter of the snow overheard, and left "the hall of her secret sigh. She came in all her "beauty; like the moon from the cloud of the East. "Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps were "like the music of songs. She saw the youth and "loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her "blue eyes rolled on him in secret; and she blest the "chief of Morven." Several other instances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendship painted by our author with a most natural and happy delicacy.

The simplicity of Ossian's manner adds great beauty to his descriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refinement; no marks either in style or thought of a studied endeavour to shine and sparkle. Ossian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings; and to speak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one instance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the first book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lovers two lonely yews are mentioned to have sprung, "whose branches wished to meet on high." This sympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit; and it is somewhat curious to find this single instance of that sort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The "joy of grief," is one of Ossian's remarkable

expressions, several times repeated. If any one shall think that it needs to be justified by a precedent, he may find it twice used by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is visited by the ghost of Patroclus; and in the Odyssey, when Ulysses meets his mother in the shades. On both these occasions, the heroes, melted with tenderness, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghost, "that we "might," say they, "in a mutual embrace, enjoy the "delight of grief."

—— Κρυεροῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο*.

But in truth the expression stands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and just expression; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Ossian makes a very proper distinction between this gratification and the destructive effect of overpowering grief. "There is a joy in grief, "when peace dwells in the breasts of the sad. But "sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar, "and their days are few." To "give the joy of grief," generally signifies to raise the strain of soft and grave music; and finely characterises the taste of Ossian's age and country. In those days, when the songs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme; preferably to that light and trifling strain of music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," said the great Fingal, in the midst of youth and victory, "strike "the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song.

* Odyss. xi. 211. Iliad, xxiii. 98.

"Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower of "spring, when it softens the branch of the oak; and "the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O "bards! To-morrow we lift the sail."

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages; and when well chosen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and animated. Besides epithets founded on bodily distinctions, a-kin to many of Homer's, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future sights, Fingal of the mildest look, Carril of other times, the mildly-blushing Evirallin; Bragela, the lonely sunbeam of Dunscaich: a Culdee, the son of the secret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in descriptive poetry, comparisons or similes are the most splendid. These chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem; and as they abound so much in the works of Ossian, and are commonly among the favourite passages of all poets, it may be expected that I should be somewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical simile always supposes two objects brought together, between which there is some near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be precisely defined. For various, almost numberless, are the analogies formed among objects, by a sprightly imagination. The relation of actual similitude, or likeness of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical comparison. Sometimes a resemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: sometimes a resemblance in one distinguishing property or circum-

stance. Very often two objects are brought together in a simile, though they resemble one another, strictly speaking, in nothing, only because they raise in the mind a train of similar, and what may be called, concordant ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to quicken and heighten the impression made by the other. Thus, to give an instance from our poet, the pleasure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct resemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Ossian has founded upon this, one of the most beautiful comparisons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt thou not listen, son of the "rock, to the song of Ossian? My soul is full of other "times; the joy of my youth returns. Thus the sun "appears in the west, after the steps of his brightness "have moved behind a storm. The green hills lift "their dewy heads. The blue streams rejoice in the "vale. The aged hero comes forth on his staff; and "his grey hair glitters in the beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raises a strong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by displaying a scene which produces in every spectator a corresponding train of pleasing emotions; the declining sun looking forth in his brightness after a storm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the still life finely animated by the circumstance of the aged hero, with his staff and his grey locks; a circumstance both extremely picturesque in itself, and peculiarly suited to the main object of the comparison. Such analogies and associations of ideas as these, are highly pleasing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many

a fine poetical picture. They diversify the scene; they aggrandize the subject; they keep the imagination awake and sprightly. For as the judgment is principally exercised in distinguishing objects, and remarking the differences among those which seem like; so the highest amusement of the imagination is to trace likenesses and agreements among those which seem different.

The principal rules which respect poetical comparisons are, that they be introduced on proper occasions, when the mind is disposed to relish them; and not in the midst of some severe and agitating passion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a resemblance neither too near and obvious, so as to give little amusement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, so as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they serve either to illustrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and distinct; or at least, to heighten and embellish it, by a suitable association of images.*

Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his allusions will of course be taken from those objects which he sees around him, and which have often struck his fancy. For this reason, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in some measure, acquainted with the natural history of the country where the scene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence so many lions, and tigers, and eagles, and ser-

* See Elements of Criticism, ch. 19. vol. 3.

pents, which we meet with in the similes of modern poets; as if these animals had acquired some right to a place in poetical comparisons for ever, because employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are absurdly used for illustration by us, who know them only at second-hand, or by description. To most readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe lions or tigers by similes taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Ossian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature which he saw before his eyes; and by consequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian scenery; but with the mists, and clouds, and and storms, of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in similes than Ossian. There are in this collection as many, at least, as in the whole Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are sparkling ornaments; and, like all things that sparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their lustre. But if Ossian's similes be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly shorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration less; he just glances aside to some resembling object, and instantly returns to his former track. Homer's similes include a wider range of objects. But in return, Ossian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be said for all those which Homer employs. The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, Clouds and Meteors, Lightning and Thunder, Seas and Whales, Rivers, Torrents, Winds, Ice, Rain,

Snow, Dews, Mist, Fire and Smoke, Trees and Forests, Heath and Grass and Flowers, Rocks and Mountains, Music and Songs, Light and Darkness, Spirits and Ghosts; these form the circle within which Ossian's comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from Birds and Beasts; as Eagles, Sea Fowl, the Horse, the Deer, and the Mountain Bee; and a very few from such operations of art as were then known. Homer has diversified his imagery by many more allusions to the animal world; to Lions, Bulls, Goats, Herds of Cattle, Serpents, Insects; and to the various occupations of rural and pastoral life. Ossian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the desert, uncultivated state of his country, which suggested to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudest form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was slender, as they were little subjected to the uses of man.

The great objection made to Ossian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the same comparisons. In a work so thick sown with similes, one could not but expect to find images of the same kind sometimes suggested to the poet by resembling objects; especially to a poet like Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his Lions and Bulls, and Flocks of Sheep, recur with little or no variation; nay, sometimes in the very same words? The objection made to Ossian is, however, founded, in a great measure, upon a mistake. It has been supposed by inattentive readers,

that wherever the Moon, the Cloud, or the Thunder, returns in a simile, it is the same simile, and the same Moon, or Cloud, or Thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the similes are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in substance the same; but the image is new; for the appearance of the object is changed; it is presented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumstances, to make it suit the different illustration for which it is employed. In this lies Ossian's great art; in so happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correspond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one instance the Moon, which is very frequently introduced into his comparisons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the Moon is a greater object of attention than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diversified its appearance. The shield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when it moves a dun circle through "the heavens." The face of a ghost, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the setting moon." And a different appearance of a ghost, thin and indistinct, is like "the "new moon seen through the gathered mist, when the "sky pours down its flaky snow, and the world is silent "and dark;" or, in a different form still, is like "the "watery beam of the moon, when it rushes from "between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on "the field." A very opposite use is made of the moon in the description of Agandecca: "She came in all "her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the "East." Hope, succeeded by disappointment, is "joy

" rising on her face, and sorrow returning again, like a " thin cloud on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generosity, " His " face brightened like the full moon of heaven, when " the clouds vanish away, and leave her calm and broad " in the midst of the sky." Venvela is " bright as the " moon when it trembles o'er the western wave;" but the soul of the guilty Uthal is " dark as the troubled " face of the moon, when it foretels the storm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon allusion, it is said of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, " Nor long " shalt thou lift the spear, mildly shining beam of " youth! Death stands dim behind thee, like the " darkened half of the moon behind its growing light."

Another instance of the same nature may be taken from mist, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Ossian, he applies to a variety of purposes, and pursues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is " like the mist of Cromla, when " it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of the " west."—" The song comes with its music to melt and " please the ear. It is like soft mist, that rising from " a lake pours on the silent vale. The green flowers " are filled with dew. The sun returns in its strength, " and the mist is gone*."—But, for the most part, mist,

* There is a remarkable propriety in this comparison. It is intended to explain the effect of soft and mournful music. Armin appears disturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor says to him, " Why bursts the sigh of Armin? Is there a cause to " mourn? The song comes with its music to melt and please the " ear. It is like soft mist, &c." that is, such mournful songs have

is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. "The soul of Nathos was sad, like "the sun in the day of mist, when his face is watery "and dim." "The darkness of old age comes like "the mist of the desert." The face of a ghost is "pale "as the mist of Cromla." "The gloom of battle is "rolled along as mist that is poured on the valley, when "storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven." Fame, suddenly departing, is likened to "mist that flies away "before the rustling wind of the vale." A ghost, slowly vanishing, to "mist that melts by degrees on "the sunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared to a pestilential fog. "I love a foe like Cathmor," says Fingal, "his soul is "great; his arm is strong; his battles are full of fame. "But the little soul is like a vapour that hovers round "the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, "lest the winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the "cave; and it sends forth the dart of death." This is a simile highly finished. But there is another which is still more striking, founded also on mist, in the 4th book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interposes, rebukes, and silences them. The poet intends to give us the highest idea of Cathmor's superiority; and most effectually accomplishes his intention by the following happy image "They sunk from the king on either side; like two "columns of morning mist, when the sun rises between

a happy effect to soften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moisture of the mist refreshes and nourishes the flowers; whilst the sadness they occasion is only transient, and soon dispelled by the succeeding occupations and amusements of life: "The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone."

"them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling "on either side; each towards its reedy pool." These instances may sufficiently shew with what richness of imagination Ossian's comparisons abound, and at the same time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it must be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison of their similes more than of other passages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer and Ossian have conducted some images of the same kind. This might be shewn in many instances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general store-house of all imagery, the ground-work of their comparisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only a few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr. Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here. The parellel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description, on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer. The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words.* "When now the conflicting hosts joined in the field of

* Iliad, iv. 446. and Iliad, viii. 60.

"battle, then were mutually opposed shields, and "swords, and the strength of armed men. The bossy "bucklers were dashed against each other. The uni-"versal tumult rose. There were mingled the trium-"phant shouts and the dying groans of the victors and "the vanquished. The earth streamed with blood. "As when winter torrents, rushing from the moun-"tains, pour into a narrow valley, their violent waters. "They issue from a thousand springs, and mix in the "hollowed channel. The distant shepherd hears on "the mountain, their roar from afar. Such was the "terror and the shout of the engaging armies." In another passage, the poet, much in the manner of Ossian, heaps simile on simile, to express the vastness of the idea, with which his imagination seems to labour. "With a mighty shout the hosts engage. Not so loud "roars the wave of ocean, when driven against the "shore by the whole force of the boisterous north; "not so loud in the woods of the mountain, the noise "of the flame, when rising in its fury to consume the "forest; not so loud the wind among the lofty oaks, "when the wrath of the storm rages; as was the cla-"mour of the Greeks and Trojans, when, roaring "terrible, they rushed against each other."*

To these descriptions and similes, we may oppose the following from Ossian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the same kind employed; commonly less extended; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characterises our poet. "As autumn's dark storms pour from two echo-"ing hills, towards each other, approached the heroes.

* Iliad, xiv. 393.

" As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix,
" and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark in bat-
" tle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixed his
" strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clang-
" ing, sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high;
" blood bursts and smokes around.—As the troubled
" noise of the ocean, when roll the waves on high; as
" the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the
" noise of battle."—" As roll a thousand waves to the
" rock, so Swaran's host came on; as meets a rock a
" thousand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death
" raises all his voices around, and mixes with the sound
" of shields.—The field echoes from wing to wing, as a
" hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red son
" of the furnace."—" As a hundred winds on Morven;
" as the streams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly suc-
" cessive over heaven; or as the dark ocean assaults
" the shore of the desert; so roaring, so vast, so ter-
" rible, the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath."
In several of these images, there is a remarkable simi-
larity to Homer's; but what follows is superior to any
comparison that Homer uses on this subject. " The
" groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like
" the thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on Cona;
" and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow
" wind." Never was an image of more awful subli-
mity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army ap-
proaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. " As when
" a shepherd," says Homer, " beholds from the rock
" a cloud borne along the sea by the western wind;
" black as pitch it appears from afar sailing over the
" ocean, and carrying the dreadful storm. He shrinks

" at the sight, and drives his flock into the cave ; Such, " under the Ajaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened " phalanx to the war."*—" They came," says Ossian, " over the desert like stormy clouds, when the winds " roll them over the heath ; their edges are tinged with " lightning ; and the echoing groves foresee the storm." The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a sublime idea; but the shepherd and his flock, render Homer's simile more picturesque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Ossian gives no more than the main image, strong and full. Homer adds circumstances and appendages, which amuse the fancy by enlivening the scenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to " clouds that are settled on the mountain-top, in " the day of calmness, when the strength of the north " wind sleeps."† Ossian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a disordered army, to " the mountain cloud, when the blast hath entered its " womb; and scatters the curling gloom on every " side." Ossian's clouds assume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile source of imagery to him. " The warriors followed " their chiefs, like the gathering of the rainy clouds, " behind the red meteors of heaven." An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to " clouds, " that having long threatened rain, retire slowly be- " hind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after she had determined to die, is lively and delicate. " Her " soul was resolved, and the tear was dried from her " wildly-looking eye. A troubled joy rose on her

* Iliad, iv, 275. † Ibid. v. 522.

" wind, like the red path of the lightning on a stormy " cloud." The image also of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in silence, the assassination of Oscar, until the moment came when his designs were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and complete in all its parts. " Cairbar heard their words in silence, like the cloud " of a shower; it stands dark on Cromla, till the " lightning bursts its side. The valley gleams with " red light; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood " the silent king of Temora; at length his words are " heard."

Homer's comparison of Achilles to the Dog Star, is very sublime. " Priam beheld him rushing along the " plain, shining in his armour, like the star of autumn; " bright are its beams, distinguished amidst the multi- " tude of stars in the dark hour of night. It rises in " its splendour; but its splendour is fatal; betokening " to miserable men, the destroying heat."* The first appearance of Fingal, is, in like manner, compared by Ossian, to a star or meteor. " Fingal, tall in his ship, " stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible was " the gleam of his steel; it was like the green meteor " of death, setting in the heath of Malmor, when the " traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in " heaven." The hero's appearance in Homer is more magnificent; in Ossian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a storm, is a similitude frequent among poets for describing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the most beautiful, by far, of his comparisons, founded on this object, indeed one of the most beautiful in the

* Iliad, xxii. 26.

whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. "As "the young and verdant olive, which a man hath reared "with care in a lonely field, where the springs of water "bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; it is "fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loaded "with white blossoms; when the sudden blast of a "whirlwind descending, roots it out from its bed, and "stretches it on the dust."* To this, elegant as it is, we may oppose the following simile of Ossian's, relating to the death of the three sons of Usnoth. "They fell, "like three young oaks which stood alone on the hill. "The traveller saw the lovely trees, and wondered "how they grew so lonely. The blast of the desert "came by night, and laid their green heads low. "Next day he returned; but they were withered, and "the heath was bare." Malvina's allusion to the same object, in her lamentation over Oscar, is so exquisitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place also. "I "was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar! with all "my branches round me. But thy death came, like a "blast from the desert, and laid my green head low. "The spring returned with its showers; but no leaf of "mine arose." Several of Ossian's similes taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diversified with well chosen circumstances: such as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: "They have fallen like the oak of "the desert; when it lies across a stream, and withers "in the wind of the mountains:" Or that which Ossian applies to himself; "I, like an ancient oak in Morven, "moulder alone in my place; the blast hath lopped

* Iliad, xvii. 53.

"my branches away; and I tremble at the wings of the "north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Ossian makes the same use of comparisons taken from spirits and ghosts. Swaran "roared in battle, "like the shrill spirit of a storm that sits dim on the "clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mari-"ner." His people gathered around Erragon, "like "storms around the ghost of night, when he calls them "from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them "on the land of the stranger."—"They fell before, my "son, like droves in the desert, when an angry ghost "rushes through night, and takes their green heads in "his hand." In such images Ossian appears in his strength; for very seldom have supernatural beings being painted with so much sublimity, and such force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, must yield to him in similes formed upon these. Take, for instance, the following, which is the most remarkable of this kind in the Iliad. "Meriones followed "Idomeneus to battle, like Mars, the destroyer of men, "when he rushes to war. Terror, his beloved son, "strong and fierce, attends him; who fills with dis-"may the most valiant hero. They come from Thrace, "armed against the Ephyrians and Phlegyans; nor do "they regard the prayers of either; but dispose of "success at their will*." The idea here is undoubtedly noble: but observe what a figure Ossian sets before the astonished imagination, and with what sublimely terrible circumstances he has heightened it. "He rushed

* Iliad, xiii. 298.

" in the sound of his arms; like the dreadful spirit of
" Loda; when he comes in the roar of a thousand
" storms, and scatters battles from his eyes. He sits
" on a cloud over Lochlin's seas. His mighty hand is
" on his sword. The winds lift his flaming locks. So
" terrible was Cuthullin in the day of his fame."

Homer's comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Ossian, we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similes; particularly, the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? " Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, " why didst thou come over
" the dark-blue wave to Nuath's mournful daughter?
" Why did I not pass away in secret, like the flower
" of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similes on this subject, I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is; " Sit thou on the heath, O bard! and let us hear
" thy voice; it is pleasant as the gale of the spring that
" sighs on the hunter's ear, when he wakens from

"dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits "of the hill." The other contains a short but exquisitely tender image, accompanied with the finest poetical painting. "The music of Carril was like the "memory of joys that are past, pleasant and mournful "to the soul. The ghosts of departed bards heard it "from Slimora's side. Soft sounds spread along the "wood; and the silent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would such imagery and such scenery have made, had they been presented to us, adorned with the sweetness and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have chosen all along to compare Ossian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reason. There is a much nearer correspondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of society; both are originals; both are distinguished by simplicity, sublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman stateliness which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldness, and enthusiastic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article indeed there is a resemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Ossian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, those of the other more strong; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart.

A resemblance may be sometimes observed between Ossian's comparisons, and those employed by the sacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they use with the utmost propriety*. The imagery of Scrip-

* See Dr. Lowth de Sacra Poësi Hebræorum.

ture exhibits a soil and climate altogether different from those of Ossian; a warmer country, a more smiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine press, and the threshing floor, are often presented to us, the cedar and the palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The similes are, like Ossian's, generally short, touching on one point of resemblance, rather than spread out into little episodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpressible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations shall rush like the rushings "of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and "they shall fly far off, and shall be chased as the chaff "of the mountains before the wind, and like the down "of the thistle before the whirlwind."*

Besides formal comparisons the poetry of Ossian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors: Such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala; "She "was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart "was the house of pride." This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which without pausing to form a regular simile, paints the object at one stroke. "Thou art to me the beam of the east, rising in a land "unknown." "In peace, thou art the gale of spring; "in war, the mountain storm." "Pleasant be thy rest, "O lovely beam, soon hast thou set on our hills! The "steps of thy departure were stately, like the moon on

* Isaiah, xvii. 13.

"the blue trembling wave. But thou hast left us in "darkness, first of the maids of Lutha!—Soon hast "thou set, Malvina! but thou risest, like the beam of "the east, among the spirits of thy friends, where they "sit in their stormy halls, the chambers of the thun-"der." This is correct and finely supported. But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense. "Trathal went forth with the stream of his "people; but they met a rock; Fingal stood unmoved; "broken they rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll "in safety; the spear of the king pursued their flight."

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experience, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten men's ideas and expressions. Yet Ossian's hyperboles appear not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated state, in which, as was before shewn, poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among most other barbarous nations. One of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuthullin of the landing of the foe. But this is so far from deserving censure that it merits praise, as being, on that occasion, natural and proper. The scout arrives, trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no passion disposes men to hyperbolize more than terror. It both annihilates themselves in their own

apprehension, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report, which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through which we have gone "to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants "thereof; and all the people that we saw in it, are "men of a great stature: and there saw we giants, the "sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we "were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were "we in their sight."*

With regard to personifications, I formerly observed that Ossian was sparing, and I accounted for his being so. Allegorical personages he has none; and their absence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of those shadowy beings, which have not the support even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, seldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too visible and phantastic: and overthrows that impression of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the serious and pathetic scenes of Ossian especially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in tragedy; serving only unseasonably to amuse the fancy, whilst they stopped the current, and weakened the force of passion.

With apostrophes or addresses to persons absent or

* Numbers, xiii. 32, 33.

dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of passion, our poet abounds; and they are among his highest beauties. Witness the apostrophe, in the first book of Fingal, to the maid of Inistore, whose lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuthullin to Bragela at the conclusion of the same book. He commands the harp to be struck in her praise; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately suggesting to him a crowd of tender ideas; "Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to find the sails of Cuthullin? The sea is "rolling far distant, and its white foam shall deceive "thee for my sails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this situation, he becomes afraid of the harm she may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthusiasm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious strain of modern poetry, "Retire," he proceeds, "retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark "winds sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my "feasts, and think of the times that are past; for I will "not return till the storm of war has ceased. O "Connal, speak of wars and arms, and send her from "my mind; for lovely with her raven hair is the white-"bosomed daughter of Sorglan." This breathes all the native spirit of passion and tenderness.

The addresses to the sun, to the moon, and to the evening star, must draw the attention of every reader of taste, as among the most splendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious, to need any particular comment. In one passage only of the address to the moon, there appears some obscurity. "Whither dost thou retire from thy

" course, when the darkness of thy countenance grows?
" Hast thou thy hall like Ossian? Dwellest thou in
" the shadow of grief? Have thy sisters fallen from
" heaven? Are they who rejoiced with thee at night,
" no more? Yes, they have fallen, fair light! and thou
" dost often retire to mourn." We may be at a loss to comprehend, at first view, the ground of these speculations of Ossian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumstances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the present situation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition, every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loss of all his friends, is meditating on the different phases of the moon. Her waning and darkness presents to his melancholy imagination, the image of sorrow; and presently the idea arises, and is indulged, that, like himself, she retires to mourn over the loss of other moons, or of stars, whom he calls her sisters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkness suggested the idea of mourning, and mourning suggested nothing so naturally to Ossian, as the death of beloved friends. An instance precisely similar of this influence of passion, may be seen in a passage which has always been admired of Shakespeare's King Lear. The old man on the point of distraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, sees Edgar appear disguised like a beggar and a madman.

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
Couldest thou leave nothing? Didst thou give them all?
Kent. He had no daughters, Sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature,
To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters

King Lear, Act 3. Scene 5.

The apostrophe to the winds, in the opening of Darthula, is in the highest spirit of poetry. "But the "winds deceive thee, O Darthula: and deny the "woody Etha to thy sails. These are not thy moun-"tains, Nathos, nor is that the roar of thy climbing "waves, The halls of Cairbar are near, and the towers "of the foe lift their head.—Where have you been, ye "southern winds; when the sons of my love were de-"ceived? But ye have been sporting on plains, and "pursuing the thistle's beard. O that ye had been "rustling in the sails of Nathos, till the hills of Etha "rose! till they rose in their clouds; and saw their "coming chief." This passage is remarkable for the resemblance it bears to an expostulation with the wood nymphs, on their absence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, Virgil has copied from Theocritus, and Milton has very happily imitated from both.

> Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorseless deep
> Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
> F r neither were ye playing on the steep
> Where your old bards, the famous Druids lie;
> Nor on the shaggy top of Mona, high,
> Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.*

Having now treated fully of Ossian's talents with re-spect to description and imagery, it only remains to

* Milton's Lycidas. See Theocrit. Idyll, I.
Πᾶ ποκ' ἄρ' ἦσθ' ὄκα Δαφνις ἐτακετο; πᾶ ποκα
Νυμφαι, &c.
And Virg. Eclog. 10.
Quæ nemora, aut qui vos saltus habuere, puellæ, &c.

make some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situation of those who utter them. In this respect, Ossian is as correct as most writers His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case, had the sentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Darthula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

The sublime is not confined to sentiment alone. It belongs to description also; and whether in description or in sentiment, imports such ideas presented to the mind, as to raise it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and astonishment. This is the highest effect either of eloquence or poetry; and to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the strongest and warmest conception of some object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Ossian, may, I think, sufficiently appear from many of the passages I have already had occasion to quote. To produce more instances were superfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal; if the address to the sun, in Carthon; if the similes founded upon ghosts and spirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as examples,

and illustrious ones too, of the true poetical sublime, I confess myself entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumstances, indeed, of Ossian's composition, are favourable to the sublime, more perhaps than to any other species of beauty. Accuracy and correctness; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts; we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful will appear to more advantage in the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes; but, amidst the rude scenes of nature, amidst rocks and torrents and whirlwinds and battles, dwells the sublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the lesser graces, and perfectly consistent with a certain noble disorder. It associates naturally with that grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes our author. For the sublime is an awful and serious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of Trouble, and Terror, and Darkness.

> Ipse pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruscâ
> Fulmina molitur dextrâ; quo maxima motu
> Terra tremit; fugere feræ; et mortalia corda
> Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor; ille, flagranti
> Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
> Dejicit.—— VIRG. Georg. I.

Simplicity and conciseness, are neverfailing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expression. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few, and in plain words. For every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells, when a lofty description or sen-

timent is presented to it, in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone. Hence the concise and simple style of Ossian gives great advantage to his sublime conceptions; and assists them in seizing the imagination with full power *

Sublimity as belonging to sentiment, coincides in a great measure with magnanimity, heroism, and generosity of sentiment. Whatever discovers human nature in its greatest elevation; whatever bespeaks a high effort of soul; or shews a mind superior to pleasures, to dangers, and to death; forms what may be called the moral or sentimental sublime. For this Ossian is

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* The noted saying of Julius Cæsar, to the pilot in a storm: "Quid times? Cæsarem vehis;" is maganimous and sublime. Lucan, not satisfied with this simple conciseness, resolved to amplify and improve the thought. Observe, how every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till, at last, it ends in tumid declamation.

> Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
> Trade sinum. Italiam, si cœlo auctore, recusas,
> Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris
> Vectorem non nosse tuum; quem numina nunquam
> Destituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
> Cum post vota venit; medias perrumpe procellas
> Tutelâ secure meâ. Cœli iste freti que,
> Non puppis nostræ, labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam
> A fluctu defendit onus.
> ——— Quid tantâ strage paratur,
> Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
> Quid præstet fortuna mihi.——
>
> PHARSAL. V. 578.

eminently distinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble sentiment throughout all his works. Particularly in all the sentiments of Fingal there is a grandeur and loftiness proper to swell the mind with the highest ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he pursues are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generosity more than by force. A portion of the same spirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debasing passions among Fingal's warriors; no spirit of avarice or of insult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a desire of being distinguished and remembered for gallant actions; a love of justice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the strain of sentiment in the works of Ossian.

But the sublimity of moral sentiments, if they wanted the softening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and stiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in comparison of that deep interest which the heart takes in tender and pathetic scenes; where, by a mysterious attachment to the objects of compassion, we are pleased and delighted, even whilst we mourn. With scenes of this kind Ossian abounds; and his high merit in these is incontestible. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the least sensibility, will question. The general character of his poetry, is the heroic mixed with the elegiac strain;

admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expresses it, "the joy of grief," it is visible, that, on all moving subjects, he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic situations, than what his works present. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no subtile refinements on sorrow; no substitution of description in place of passion. Ossian felt strongly himself; and the heart, when uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for instance, can be more moving than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune? Gaul, the son of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had suffered, comes to her rescue. Their meeting is tender in the highest degree. He proposes to engage her foe, in single combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himself shall fall. "And shall the daughter of Nuäth live?" she replied, with a bursting sigh. "Shall I live in Tromathon, and the son of Morni low? My heart is not of "that rock; nor my soul careless as that sea, which "lifts its blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath "the storm. The blast, which shall lay thee low, "shall spread the branches of Oithona on earth. We "shall wither together, son of car-borne Morni! The "narrow house is pleasant to me; and the grey stone "of the dead; for never more will I leave thy rocks, "sea-surrounded Tromathon!——Chief of Strumon, "why camest thou over the waves to Nuäth's mournful "daughter? Why did not I pass away in secret, like

"the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, "and strews its withered leaves on the blast? Why "didst thou come, O Gaul! to hear my departing "sigh?—O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright "beams of my fame! Then had my years come on "with joy; and the virgins would bless my steps. "But I fall in youth, son of Morni, and my father "shall blush in his hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuthullin's expressions of grief after his defeat, we behold the sentiments of a hero, generous but desponding. The situation is remarkably fine. Cuthullin, roused from his cave, by the noise of battle, sees Fingal victorious in the field. He is described as kindling at the sight. "His hand is on the sword of his fathers; his red-"rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to rush "to battle; and thrice did Connal stop him;" suggesting that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the shew of superfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuthullin yields to this generous sentiment; but we see it stinging him to the heart with the sense of his own disgrace. "Then, "Carril, go," replied the chief, "and greet the king of "Morven. When Lochlin falls away like a stream "after rain, and the noise of the battle is over, then be "thy voice sweet in his ear, to praise the king of swords. "Give him the sword of Caithbat; for Cuthullin is "worthy no more to lift the arms of his fathers. But, "O ye ghosts of the lonely Cromla! Ye souls of chiefs "that are no more! Be ye the companions of Cuthul-"lin, and talk to him in the cave of his sorrow. For "never more shall I be renowned among the mighty

"in the land. I am like a beam that has shone: like "a mist that has fled away; when the blast of the "morning came, and brightened the shaggy side of "the hill. Connal! talk of arms no more: departed "is my fame. My sighs shall be on Cromla's wind; "till my footsteps cease to be seen. And thou, white-"bosomed Bragela! mourn over the fall of my fame; "for vanquished I will never return to thee, thou sun-"beam of Dun-scaich!"

———Æstuat ingens
Uno in corde pudor, luctusque, et conscia virtus.

Besides such extended pathetic scenes, Ossian frequently pierces the heart by a single unexpected stroke. When Oscar fell in battle, "No father mourned his "son slain in youth; no brother his brother of love; "they fell without tears, for the chief of the people "was low." In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating to the death of Cuthullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force. "And is the son "of Semo fallen?" said Carril with a sigh. "Mourn-"ful are Tura's walls, and sorrow dwells at Dun-"scaich. Thy spouse is left alone in her youth; the "son of thy love is alone. He shall come to Bragela, "and ask her why she weeps. He shall lift his eyes "to the wall, and see his father's sword. Whose "sword is that? he will say; and the soul of his mo-"ther is sad." Soon after Fingal had shewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner,

his sons to the chase. "Call," says he, "Fillan and "Ryno—But he is not here—My son rests on the "bed of death."—This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet,

> If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife—
> My wife!—my wife—What wife?—I have no wife—
> Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!
>
> *Othello*, Act 5. Scene 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is similar; but the circumstances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confusion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himself, and suppresses his rising grief.

The contrast which Ossian frequently makes between his present and his former state, diffuses over his whole poetry, a solemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impression on every heart. The conclusion of the songs of Selma is particularly calculated for this purpose. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a stronger and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were the "words of the bards in the days of the song; when "the king heard the music of harps, and the tales of "other times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills, "and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice "of Cona*; the first among a thousand bards. But "age is now on my tongue, and my soul has failed. I "hear, sometimes, the ghosts of bards, and learn their "pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind; I "hear the call of years. They say, as they pass along,

* Ossian himself is poetically called the voice of Cona.

"Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the "narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame. Roll "on, ye dark-brown years! for ye bring no joy in your "course. Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength "has failed. The sons of the song are gone to rest. "My voice remains like a blast that roars lonely on a "sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The "dark moss whistles there, and the distant mariner "sees the waving trees."

Upon the whole; if to feel strongly, and to describe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Ossian must, after fair examination, be held to possess that genius in a high degree. The question is not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this or that passage might not have been worked up with more art and skill, by some writer of happier times? A thousand such cold and frivolous criticisms, are altogether indecisive as to his genuine merit. But, has he the spirit, the fire, the inspiration, of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his sentiments? Does he interest by his descriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? These are the great characteristics of true poetry. Where these are found, he must be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon slight defects. A few beauties of this high kind, transcend whole volumes of faultless mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt Ossian may sometimes appear by reason of his conciseness. But he is sublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extensive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulness and accuracy of description, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in

strength of imagination, in grandeur of sentiment, in native majesty of passion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear stream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being destitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as strength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other respects much less than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but must judge the translation to deserve the highest praise, on account of its beauty and elegance. Of its faithfulness and accuracy, I have been assured by persons skilled in the Galic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to translate literally, and yet with such a glow of poetry; to keep alive so much passion, and support so much dignity throughout, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice

and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly as Mr. Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget, whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For, we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress; divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their original languages. If then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet; and not to please only, but often to command, to transport, to melt, the heart; we may very safely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly assign him a place among those whose works are to last for ages.

CATHLIN OF CLUTHA:

A

Poem.

ARGUMENT.

An address to Malvina, the daughter of Toscar. The poet relates the arrival of Cathlin in *Selma* *, to solicit aid against Duth-carmor of Cluba, who had killed Cathmol, for the sake of his daughter Lanul. Fingal declining to make a choice among his heroes, who were all claiming the command of the expedition; they retired *each to his hill of ghosts;* to be determined by dreams. The spirit of Trenmor appears to Ossian and Oscar: they sail, from the bay of Carmona, and, on the fourth day, appear off the valley of Rathcol, in Inis-huna, where Duth-carmor had fixed his residence. Ossian dispatches a bard to Duth-carmor to demand battle. Night comes on. The distress of Cathlin of Clutha. Ossian devolves the command on Oscar, who, according to the custom of the kings of Morven, before battle, retired to a neighbouring hill. Upon the coming on of day, the battle joins. Oscar and Duth-carmor meet. The latter falls. Oscar carries the mail and helmet of Duth-carmor to Cathlin, who had retired from the field. Cathlin is discovered to be the daughter of Cathmol, in disguise, who had been carried off, by force, by, and had made her escape from, Duth-carmor.

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* Is not this *Selma* in Ireland? Is not this the same which I have affirmed to be at what is now called *White Abbey*? at the foot of *Carmony Hill*, which is on the shore of that arm of the sea, now called by some Belfast Loch, by others Carrickfergus Bay,—which I affirm to be the *Bay of Tura*, of Ossian? *C.*

CATHLIN OF CLUTHA:

A

Poem.

COME*, thou beam that art lonely, from watching in the night! The squally winds are around thee, from all their echoing hills. Red, over my hundred streams, are the light-covered paths of the dead. They rejoice, on the eddying winds, in the season of night.

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* The traditions, which accompany this poem, inform us, that it went, of old, under the name of *Laoi-Oi-lutha*; i. e. the *hymn of the maid of Lutha.* They pretend also to fix the time of its composition, to the third year after the death of Fingal; that is, during the expedition of Fergus the son of Fingal, to the banks of *Uisca-duthon*. In support of this opinion, the Highland senachies have prefixed to this poem, an address of Ossian, to Congal the young son of Fergus, which I have rejected, as having no manner of connection with the rest of the piece. It has poetical merit; and, probably, it was the opening of one of Ossian's other poems, though the bards injudiciously transferred it to the piece now before us.

"Congal, son of Fergus of Durath, thou light between thy locks, ascend to the rock of Selma, to the oak of the breaker of shields. Look over the bosom of night, it is streaked with the red paths of the dead: look on the night of ghosts, and kindle, O Congal! thy soul. Be not, like the moon on a stream, lonely in the midst of clouds: darkness closes around it; and the beam departs. Depart not, son of Fergus! ere thou markest the field with thy sword. Ascend to the rock of Selma; to the oak of the breaker of shields."

Dwells there no joy in song, white hand of the harps of Lutha? Awake the voice of the string; roll my soul to me. It is a stream that has failed. Malvina, pour the song.

I hear thee, from thy darkness, in Selma, thou that watchest, lonely, by night! Why didst thou with-hold the song, from Ossian's failing soul? As the failing brook to the ear of the hunter, descending from his storm-covered hill; in a sun-beam rolls the echoing stream; he hears, and shakes his dewy locks: such is the voice of Lutha, to the friend of the spirits of heroes. My swelling bosom beats high. I look back on the days that are past. Come, thou beam that art lonely, from watching in the night!

In the echoing bay of Carmona* we saw, one day,

* Carmona, *bay of the dark brown hills*, an arm of the sea, in the neighbourhood of Selma. M.—*Vide* the Map. C.

Here is a proof that the *Selma* of Ossian, is the same which in the geographical argument, I place at the foot of Cromla, near *Carmona*, on the shore of Belfast Loch, a proof that there was a Selma in Ireland. C.

In this paragraph are mentioned the signals presented to Fingal by those who came to demand his aid. The suppliants held, in one hand, a shield covered with blood, and, in the other, a broken spear; the first a symbol of the death of their friends, the last an emblem of their own helpless situation. If the king chose to grant succours, which generally was the case, he reached to them *the shell of feasts*, as a token of his hospitality and friendly intentions towards him.

It may not be disagreeable to the reader to lay here before him the ceremony of the Cran-tara, which was of a similar nature, and, till very lately, used in the Highlands. When the news of an enemy came to the residence of the chief, he immediately killed a goat with his own sword, dipped the end of an half burnt piece of wood in the blood, and gave it to one of his servants, to be

the bounding ship. On high, hung a broken shield; it was marked with wandering blood. Forward came a youth, in arms, and stretched his pointless spear. Long, over his tearful eyes, hung loose his disordered locks. Fingal gave the shell of kings. The words of the stranger arose. "In his hall lies Cathmol of Clutha, by the winding of his own dark streams. Duth-carmor saw white-bosomed Lanul*, and pierced her father's side. In the rushy desert were my steps. He fled in the season of night. Give thine aid to Cathlin to revenge his father. I sought thee not as a beam, in a land of clouds. Thou, like the son, art known, king of echoing Selma!"†

Selma's king looked around. In his presence, we rose in arms. But who should lift the shield? for all had claimed the war. The night came down; we strode, in silence; each to his hill of ghosts: that spirits might

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carried to the next hamlet. From hamlet to hamlet this *tessara* was carried with the utmost expedition, and, in the space of a few hours, the whole clan were in arms, and convened in an appointed place; the name of which was the only word that accompanied the delivery of the *Cran-tara*. This symbol was the manifesto of the chief by which he threatened fire and sword to those of his clan, that did not immediately appear at his standard.

* Lanul, *full eyed*, a surname which, according to tradition, was bestowed on the daughter of Cathmol, on account of her beauty; this tradition, however, may have been founded on that partiality, which the bards have shewn to *Cathlin of Clutha*; for, according to them, no *falsehood could dwell in the soul of the lovely.*

† The occurrences in this poem had their rise during the time Ossian lived on the banks of the lake of Lego, after his marriage with Evirallin the mother of Oscar! and in order of time this composition should have taken place after the poems Fingal and Temora. *C.*

descend, in our dreams, to mark us for the field. We struck the shield of the dead; we raised the hum of songs. We thrice called the ghosts of our fathers. We laid us down in dreams. Trenmor came, before mine eyes, the tall form of other years! His blue hosts were behind him in half-distinguished rows. Scarce seen is their strife in mist, or their stretching forward to deaths. I listened; but no sound was there. The forms were empty wind!

I started from the dream of ghosts. On a sudden blast flew my whistling hair. Low-sounding, in the oak, is the departure of the dead. I took my shield from its bough. Onward came the rattling of steel.. It was Oscar* of Lego. He had seen his fathers. "As rushes forth the blast, on the bosom of whitening waves; so careless shall my course be, through ocean, to the dwelling of foes. I have seen the dead, my father! My beating soul is high! My fame is bright before me, like the streak of light on a cloud, when the broad sun comes forth, red traveller of the sky!"

"Grandson of Branno," I said, "not Oscar alone shall meet the foe. I rush forward, through ocean, to the woody dwelling of heroes. Let us contend, my son, like eagles, from one rock; when they lift their broad wings, against the stream of winds." We raised

* Oscar is here called *Oscar of Lego*, from his mother being the daughter of Branno, a powerful chief, on the banks of that lake. It is remarkable that Ossian addresses no poem to Malvina, in which her lover Oscar was not one of the principal actors. His attention to her, after the death of his son, shews that delicacy of sentiment is not confined, as some fondly imagine, to our own polished times.

our sails in Carmona. From three ships, they marked my shield on the wave, as I looked on nightly Ton-thena,* red traveller between the clouds. Four days came the breeze abroad. Lumon came forward in mist. In winds were its hundred groves. Sun-beams marked at times, its brown side. White, leapt the foamy streams, from all its echoing rocks.

A green field, in the bosom of hills, winds silent with its own blue stream. Here, midst the waving of oaks, were the dwellings of kings of old. But silence for many dark-brown years, had settled in grassy Rath-col;† for the race of heroes had failed, along the pleasant vale. Duth-carmor was here, with his people, dark rider of the wave. Ton-thena had hid her head in the sky. He bound his white-bosomed sails. His course is on the hills of Rath-col, to the seats of roes.

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* Ton-thena, *fire of the wave*, was the remarkable star mentioned in the seventh book of Temora, which directed the course of Larthon to Ireland. It seems to have been well known to those who sailed on that sea, which divides Ireland from South-Britain. As the course of Ossian was along the coast of Inis-huna, he mentions, with propriety, that star which directed the voyage of the colony from that country to Ireland. *M.*

Was it not in Ireland? Or are we to understand that the part called *Ireland* by Ossian, namely, that bounded by my map, was peopled by a colony from Inis-huna? Derry and Donegall! It is probable!—The Bann only ran between them! *Vide* the Map. *C.*

† Rath-col, *woody field*, does not appear to have been the residence of Duth-carmor: he seems rather to have been forced thither by a storm; at least I should think that to be the meaning of the poet, from his expression, that *Ton-thena had hid her head*, and that *he bound his white-bosomed sails;* which is as much as to say, that the weather was stormy, and that Duth-carmor put into the bay of Rath-col for shelter. *M.*

Probably the mouth of the Bann. *Vide* the Map. *C.*

We came. I sent the bard, with songs, to call the foe to fight, Duth-carmor heard him, with joy. The king's soul was like a beam of fire; a beam of fire, marked with smoke, rushing, varied, through the bosom of night. The deeds of Duth-carmor were dark, though his arm was strong.

Night came, with the gathering of clouds. By the beam of the oak we sat down. At a distance stood Cathlin of Clutha. I saw the changeful * soul of the stranger. As shadows fly over the field of grass, so various is Cathlin's cheek. It was fair, within locks, that rose on Rath-col's wind. I did not rush, amidst his soul, with my words. I bade the song to rise.

"Oscar of Lego," I said, "be thine the secret hill,†

* From this circumstance, succeeding bards feigned that Cathlin, who is here in the disguise of a young warrior, had fallen in love with Duth-carmor at a feast, to which he had been invited by her father. Her love was converted into detestation for him, after he had murdered her father. But *as those rain-bows of heaven are changeful*, say my authors, speaking of women, she felt the return of her former passion upon the approach of Duth-carmor's danger. I myself, who think more favourably of the sex, must attribute the agitation of Cathlin's mind to her extreme sensibility to the injuries done her by Duth-carmor: and this opinion is favoured by the sequel of the story.

† This passage alludes to the well-known custom among the ancient kings of Scotland, to retire from their army on the night preceding a battle. The story which Ossian introduces in the next paragraph, concerns the fall of the Druids. It is said in many old poems, that the Druids, in the extremity of their affairs, had solicited and obtained aid from Scandinavia. Among the auxiliaries there came many pretended magicians, which circumstance Ossian alludes to, in his description of the *son of Loda*. Magic and incantation could not, however, prevail; for Trenmor, assisted by the valour of his son Trathal, entirely broke the power of the Druids.

to-night. Strike the shield, like Morven's kings. With day, thou shalt lead in war. From my rock, I shall see thee, Oscar, a dreadful form ascending in fight, like the appearance of ghosts, amidst the storms they raise. Why should mine eyes return to the dim times of old, ere yet the song had bursted forth, like the sudden rising of winds? But the years, that are past, are marked with mighty deeds. As the nightly rider of waves looks up to Tonthena of beams; so let us turn our eyes to Trenmor, the father of kings."

"Wide, in Caracha's echoing field, Carmal had poured his tribes. They were a dark ridge of waves. The grey-haired bards were like moving foam on their face. They kindled the strife around, with their red-rolling eyes. Nor alone were the dwellers of rocks; a son of Loda was there; a voice, in his own dark land, to call the ghosts from high. On his hill, he had dwelt, in Lochlin, in the midst of a leafless grove. Five stones lifted, near, their heads. Loud roared his rushing stream. He often raised his voice to the winds, when meteors marked their nightly wings; when the dark-robed moon was rolled behind her hill. Nor unheard of ghosts was he! They came with the sound of eagle wings. They turned battle, in fields, before the kings of men.

"But, Trenmor, they turned not from battle. He drew forward that troubled war; in its dark skirt was Trathal, like a rising light. It was dark; and Loda's son poured forth his signs, on night. The feeble were not before thee, son of other lands!* Then rose the

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* Trenmor and Trathal. Ossian introduced this episode, as an example to his son, from ancient times.

strife of kings, about the hill of night; but it was soft as two summer gales, shaking their light wings, on a lake. Trenmor yielded to his son; for the fame of the king had been heard. Trathal came forth before his father, and the foes failed, in echoing Caracha. The years that are past, my son, are marked with mighty deeds."*

In clouds rose the eastern light. The foe came forth in arms. The strife is mixed on Rath-col, like the roar of streams. Behold the contending of kings! They meet beside the oak. In gleams of steel the dark forms are lost; such is the meeting of meteors, in a vale by night: red light is scattered round, and men foresee the storm! Duth-carmor is low in blood! The son of Ossian overcame! Not harmless in battle was he, Malvina hand of harps!

Nor, in the field, were the steps of Cathlin. The stranger stood by a secret stream, where the foam of Rath-col skirted the mossy stones. Above, bends the branchy birch, and strews its leaves, on wind. The inverted spear of Cathlin touched, at times, the stream. Oscar brought Duth-carmor's mail: his helmet with its eagle wing. He placed them before the stranger, and his words were heard. "The foes of thy father have failed. They are laid in the field of ghosts. Renown returns to Morven, like a rising wind. Why art thou dark, chief of Clutha? Is there cause for grief?"

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* Those who deliver down this poem in tradition, lament that there is a great part of it lost. In particular they regret the loss of an episode, which was here introduced, with the sequel of the story of Carmal and his Druids. Their attachment to it was founded on the descriptions of magical enchantments which it contained.

"Son of Ossian of harps, my soul is darkly sad. I behold the arms of Cathmol, which he raised in war. Take the mail of Cathlin, place it high in Selma's hall; that thou mayest remember the hapless in thy distant land." From white breasts descended the mail. It was the race of kings; the soft-handed daughter of Cathmol, at the streams of Clutha! Duth-carmor saw her bright in the hall; he had come, by night, to Clutha. Cathmol met him, in battle, but the hero fell. Three days dwelt the foe, with the maid. On the fourth she fled in arms. She remembered the race of kings, and felt her bursting soul!

Why, maid of Toscar of Lutha, should I tell how Cathlin failed? Her tomb is at rushy Lumon, in a distant land.* Near it were the steps of Sul-malla, in the days of grief. She raised the song, for the daughter of strangers, and touched the mournful harp.

Come, from the watching of night, Malvina, lonely beam!

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* The scene of this poem is on the western bank of the river Bann. Lumon, and Rath-coll, are both in the county of Derry, the former nearly opposite to Coleraine. The latter farther west. Many traditions respecting Ossian and his Celtic heroes still remain in the counties of Derry and Donegall! Collected they would make as many volumes as Gibbon's Rome! They require an *Irish* scholar or antiquary. *C.*

SUL-MALLA OF LUMON:

A

Poem.

ARGUMENT

This poem, which, properly speaking, is a continuation of the last, opens with an address to Sul-malla, the daughter of the king of Inis-huna, whom Ossian met, at the chase, as he returned from the battle of Rath-col. Sul-malla invites Ossian and Oscar to a feast, at the residence of her father, who was then absent in the wars. Upon hearing their name and family, she relates an expedition of Fingal into Inis-huna. She casually mentioning Cathmor, chief of Atha (who then assisted her father against his enemies), Ossian introduces the episode of Culgorm and Suran-dronlo, two Scandinavian kings, in whose wars Ossian himself and Cathmor were engaged on opposite sides. The story is imperfect, a part of the original being lost. Ossian, warned in a dream, by the ghost of Trenmor, sets sail from Inis-huna. *M.* This poem should have taken precedence of some of the foregoing ones; and I am induced to hazard an opinion that the conjecture of the translator relative to the country of Inis-huna is *badly* founded.—Lumon, I think, is nearly opposite Colerain, on the Derry side of the river Bann. This is borne out by the sequel! *C.*

SUL-MALLA OF LUMON:

A

Poem.

WHO * moves so stately, on Lumon, at the roar of the foamy waters? Her hair falls upon her heaving breast. White is her arm behind, as slow she bends

* The expedition of Ossian to Inis-huna happened a short time before Fingal passed over into Ireland, to dethrone Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul. Cathmor, the brother of Cairbar, was aiding Conmor, king of Inis-huna, in his wars, at the time that Ossian defeated Duth-carmor, in the valley of Rath-col. The poem is more interesting, that it contains so many particulars concerning those personages, who make so great a figure in Temora.

The *exact correspondence* in the manners and customs of Inis-huna, as here described, to those of Caledonia, leaves no room to doubt, that the inhabitants of both were originally the same people. *M.* Here the translator is at variance with himself.—The Celtæ and Scandinavians were very different in their manners and customs—but those of the Irish, at Inis-huna, and the Celtæ, were the same. Hence a proof in favour of my system of proving Ossian. *C.* Some may allege, that Ossian might transfer, in his poetical descriptions, the manners of his own nation to foreigners. This objection is easily answered. Why has he not done this with regard to the inhabitants of Scandinavia? We find the latter very different in their customs and superstitions from the nations of Britain and Ireland. The Scandinavian manners are remarkably barbarous and fierce, and seem to mark out a nation much less advanced in a state of civilization, than the inhabitants of Britain were in the times of Ossian.

the bow. "Why dost thou wander in deserts, like a light through a cloudy field? The young roes are panting, by their secret rocks. Return, thou daughter of kings! the cloudy night is near! It was the young branch of green Inis-huna, Sul-malla of blue eyes. She sent the bard from her rock, to bid us to her feast. Amidst the song we sat down, in *Cluba's* echoing hall. White moved the hands of Sul-malla, on the trembling strings. Half-heard amidst the sound, was the name of *Atha's* king: he that was absent in battle for her own green land. Nor absent from her soul was he: he came midst her thoughts by night. Ton-thena looked in, from the sky, and saw her tossing arms.

The sound of shells had ceased. Amidst long locks, Sul-malla rose. She spoke with bended eyes, and asked of our course through seas; "for of the kings of men are ye, tall riders of the wave."* "Not unknown,"

* Sul-malla here discovers the quality of Ossian and Oscar from their stature and stately gait. Among nations, not far advanced in civilization, a superior beauty and stateliness of person were inseparable from nobility of blood. It was from these qualities, that those of family were known by strangers, not from tawdry trappings of state injudiciously thrown round them. The cause of this distinguishing property must, in some measure, be ascribed to their unmixed blood. They had no inducement to intermarry with the vulgar: and no low notions of interest made them deviate from their choice, in their own sphere. In states, where luxury has been long established, beauty of person is, by no means, the characteristic of antiquity of family. This must be attributed to those enervating vices, which are inseparable from luxury and wealth. A great family (to alter a little the words of the historian), it is true, like a river, becomes considerable from the length of its course, but, as it rolls on, hereditary distempers, as well as property, flow successively into it. *M.* This is applicable to some of our great families of the present day. *C.*

I said, "at his streams is he, the father of our race. Fingal has been heard of at Cluba blue-eyed daughter of kings. Nor only, at Cona's stream, is Ossian and Oscar known. Foes trembled at our voice, and shrunk at other lands."

"Not unmarked," said the maid, "by Sul-malla, is the shield of Morven's king. It hangs high, in my father's hall, in memory of the past; when Fingal came to Cluba, in the days of other years. Loud roared the boar of *Culdarnu*,* in the midst of his rocks and woods. Inis-huna sent her youths, but they failed; and virgins wept over tombs. Careless went Fingal to Culdarnu. On his spear rolled the strength of the woods. He was bright, they said, in his locks, the first of mortal men. Nor at the feast were heard his words. His deeds passed from his soul of fire, like the rolling of vapours from the face of the wandering sun. Not careless looked the blue eyes of Cluba on his stately steps. In white bosoms rose the king of Selma, in the midst of their thoughts by night. But the winds bore the stranger to the echoing vales of his roes. Nor lost to other lands was he, like a meteor that sinks in a cloud. He came forth, at times, in his brightness, to the distant dwelling of foes. His fame came, like the sound of winds, to Cluba's woody vale."†

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* *Cluba*, *Atha*, and *Culdarna*, are all Celtic or Erse names—not those of Scandinavia or Lochlin. C.

† Too partial to our own times, we are ready to mark out remote antiquity, as the region of ignorance and barbarism. This, perhaps, is extending our prejudices too far. It has been long remarked, that knowledge, in a great measure, is founded on a free intercourse between mankind; and that the mind is enlarged in proportion to the observations it has made upon the manners of

"Darkness dwells in *Cluba* of harps. the race of kings is distant far; in battle is my father *Conmor*; and Lormar * my brother, king of streams. Nor darkening alone are they; a beam from other lands, is nigh; the friend of strangers † in Atha, the troubler of the field. High from their misty hills, look forth the blue eyes of Erin; for he is far away, young dweller of their souls! Nor, harmless, white hands of Erin! is Cathmor in the skirts of war; he rolls ten thousand before him, in his distant field."

different men and nations. If we look, with attention, into the history of Fingal, as delivered by Ossian, we shall find that he was not altogether a poor ignorant hunter, confined to the narrow corner of an island. His expeditions to all parts of Scandinavia, to the north of Germany, and the different states of Great Britain and Ireland, were very numerous, and performed under such a character, and at such times, as gave him an opportunity to mark the undisguised manners of mankind, War and an active life, as they call forth, by turns, all the powers of the soul, present to us the different characters of men: in times of peace and quiet, for want of objects to exert them, the powers of the mind lie concealed, in a great measure, and we see only artificial passions and manners. It is from this consideration, I conclude, that a traveller of penetration could gather more genuine knowledge from a tour of ancient Gaul, than from the minutest observation of all the artificial manners, and elegant refinements of modern France.

* Lormar was the son of Conmor, and the brother of Sul-malla. After the death of Conmor, Lormar succeeded him in the throne. *M.* *Conmor* and *Lormar* also betray their country and origin; and aided as they were by their neighbouring prince, Cathmor of Atha, brother of Cairbar—O Neill—I can safely place the kingdom of Lumon along the banks of the Bann, in the county Derry. *C.*

† Cathmor, the son of Borbar-duthal. It would appear, from the partiality with which Sul-malla speaks of that hero, that she

"Not unseen by Ossian," I said, "rushed Cathmor from his streams, when he poured his strength on I-thorno* isle of many waves! In strife met two kings in I-thorno, Culgorm and Suran-dronlo: each from his echoing isle, stern hunters of the boar!"

"They met a boar, at a foamy stream: each pierced him with his spear. They strove for the fame of the deed; and gloomy battle rose. From isle to isle they sent a spear, broken and stained with blood, to call the friends of their fathers in their sounding arms. Cathmor came, from Erin, to Culgor m, red-eyed king: I aided Suran-dronlo, in his land of boars."

"We rushed on either side of a stream, which roared through a blasted heath. High broken rocks were round, with all their bending trees. Near were two circles of Loda, with the stone of power; where spirits descended, by night, in dark-red streams of fire. There, mixed with the murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men; they called the forms of night, to aid them in the war."

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had seen him, previous to his joining her father's army; though tradition positively asserts, that it was after his return that she fell in love with him.

* I-thorno, says tradition, was an island of Scandinavia. In it, at a hunting party, met Culgorm and Suran-dronlo, the kings of two neighbouring isles. They differed about the honour of killing a boar; and a war was kindled between them. From this episode we may learn, that the manners of the Scandinavians were much more savage and cruel, than those of Britain. It is remarkable, that the names, introduced in this story, are not of Galic original, which circumstance affords room to suppose, that it had its foundation in true history. *M.* You are wrong. *C.*

"Heedless* I stood, with my people, where fell the foamy stream from rocks. The moon moved red from the mountain. My song, at times, arose. Dark, on the other side, young Cathmor heard my voice; for he lay, beneath the oak, in all his gleaming arms. Morning came; we rushed to fight: from wing to wing is the rolling of strife. They fell like the thistle's head, beneath autumnal winds."

"In armour came a stately form: I mixed my strokes with the chief. By turns our shields are pierced: loud rung our steelly mails. His helmet fell to the ground In brightness shone the foe. His eyes, two pleasant flames, rolled between his wandering locks. I knew Cathmor of Atha, and threw my spear on earth. Dark, we turned, and silent passed to mix with other foes."

"Not so passed the striving kings †. They mixed in echoing fray: like the meeting of ghosts, in the dark wing of winds. Through either breast rushed the spears; nor yet lay the foes on earth! A rock received their fall; half-reclined they lay in death. Each held

* From the circumstance of Ossian not being present at the rites, described in the preceding paragraph, we may suppose that he held them in contempt. This difference of sentiment with regard to religion, is a sort of argument, that the Caledonians were not originally a colony of Scandinavians, as some have imagined. Concerning so remote a period, mere conjecture must supply the place of argument and positive proofs. *M*. But circumstantial evidence is against the scene of the poem being in Scandinavia; the epithets of the land of Boars, and the circles of Loda, are equally applicable to ancient Wales, Morven, and Ireland, as they could be to Scandinavia. *C*.

† Culgorm and Suran-dronlo. The combat of the kings and their attitude in death are highly picturesque, and expressive of that ferocity of manners, which distinguished the northern nations.

the lock of his foe; each grimly seemed to roll his eyes. The stream of the lock leapt on their shields, and mixed below with blood.

"The battle ceased in I-thorno. The strangers met in peace: Cathmor from Atha of streams, and Ossian, king of harps. We placed the dead in earth. Our steps were by Runar's bay. With the bounding boat, afar, advanced a ridgy wave. Dark was the rider of seas, but a beam of light was there, like the ray of the sun, in Stromlo's rolling smoak. It was the daughter*

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* Tradition has handed down the name of this princess. The bards call her Runo-forlo, which has no other sort of title for being genuine, but its not being of Galic original; a distinction which the bards had not the art to preserve, when they feigned names for foreigners. The highland senachies, who very often endeavoured to supply the deficiency they thought they found in the tales of Ossian, have given us the continuation of the story of the daughter of Suran-dronlo. The catastrophe is so unnatural, and the circumstances of it so ridiculously pompous, that, for the sake of the inventors, I shall conceal them.

The wildly beautiful appearance of Runo-forlo, made a deep impression on a chief, some ages ago, who was himself no contemptible poet. The story is romantic, but not incredible, if we make allowances for the lively imagination of a man of genius. Our chief sailing, in a storm, along one of the islands of Orkney, saw a woman, in a boat, near the shore, whom he thought, as he expresses it himself, *as beautiful as a sudden ray of the sun, on the dark heaving deep.* The verses of Ossian, on the attitude of Runo-forlo, which was so similar to that of the woman in the boat, wrought so much on his fancy, that he fell desperately in love. The winds, however, drove him from the coast, and, after a few days, he arrived at his residence in Scotland. There his passion increased to such a degree, that two of his friends, fearing the consequence, sailed to the Orkneys, to carry to him the object of his desire. Upon inquiry they soon found the nymph, and carried her to the enamoured chief; but mark his surprise, when, instead

of Suran-dronlo, wild in brightened looks. Her eyes were wandering flames, amidst disordered locks. Forward is her white arm, with the spear; her high heaving breast is seen, white as foamy waves that rise, by turns, amidst rocks. They are beautiful, but terrible, and mariners call the winds!"

"Come, ye dwellers of Loda!" she said, "come, Carchar, pale in the midst of clouds! Sluthmor that stridest in airy halls! Corchtur, terrible in winds! Receive, from his daughter's spear, the foes of Suran-dronlo. No shadow, at his roaring streams; no mildly-looking form was he! When he took up his spear, the hawks shook their sounding wings: for blood was poured around the steps of dark-eyed Suran-dronlo. He lighted me, no harmless beam, to glitter on his streams. Like meteors, I was bright, but I blasted the foes of Suran-dronlo."

* * * * * * *

Nor unconcerned heard Sul-malla, the praise of Cathmor of shields. He was within her soul, like a fire in secret heath, which awakes at the voice of the blast, and sends its beam abroad. Amidst the song removed the daughter of kings, like the voice of a summer-breeze; when it lifts the heads of flowers, and curls the lakes and streams. The rustling sound gently spreads o'er the vale, softly-pleasing as it saddens the soul.

By night came a dream to Ossian; formless stood

of a ray of the sun, he saw a skinny fisher-woman, more than middle aged, appearing before him. Tradition here ends the story, but it may be easily supposed that the passion of the chief soon subsided.

the shadow of Trenmor. He seemed to strike the dim shield, on Selma's streamy rock. I rose, in my rattling steel; I knew that war was near, before the winds our sails were spread; when Lumon shewed its streams to the morn*.

Come from the watching of night, Malvina, lovely beam!

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* This beautiful Poem bears out my conjectures of the *scite* of Lumon, and I am emboldened to declare, that it is the county of Derry, in lonely Inisfail. The modern geographer is not to imagine, that Ulster in those days was so large as at present; the country which I have laid down as the kingdom of O'Neill, is all that the ancients knew under the name of Ulster. *Vide* the Map. C

THE

WAR OF INIS-THONA:

A

Poem.

ARGUMENT.

Reflections on the poet's youth.* An apostrophe to Selma. Oscar obtains leave to go to Inis-thona, an island of Scandinavia. The mournful story of Argon and Ruro, the two sons of the king of Inis-thona. Oscar revenges their death, and returns in triumph to Selma. A soliloquy by the poet himself.

THE WAR OF INIS-THONA:

A Poem.

OUR youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of heath. He sleeps in the mild beams of the sun; he awakes amidst a storm; the red lightning flies around: trees shake their heads to the wind! He looks back with joy, on the day of the sun; and the pleasant dreams of his rest! When shall Ossian's youth return? When his ear delight in the sound of arms? When shall I, like Oscar, travel in the light of my steel? Come, with your streams, ye hills of Cona! listen to the voice of Ossian. The song rises, like the sun, in my soul. I feel the joys of other times!

I behold thy towers, O Selma! the oaks of thy shaded wall: thy streams sound in my ear; thy heroes gather around. Fingal sits in the midst. He leans on the shield of Trenmor: his spear stands against the wall; he listens to the song of his bards. The deeds of his arm are heard; the actions of the king in his youth! Oscar had returned from the chase, and heard the hero's praise. He took the shield of Branno* from the wall;

* This is Branno, the father of Evirallin, and grandfather to Oscar; he was of Irish extraction, and lord of the country round

his eyes were filled with tears. Red was the cheek of youth. His voice was trembling low. My spear shook its bright head in his hand: he spoke to Morven's king.

"Fingal! thou king of heroes! Ossian, next to him in war! ye have fought in your youth; your names are renowned in song. Oscar is like the mist of Cona; I appear and I vanish away. The bard will not know my name. The hunter will not search in the heath for my tomb. Let me fight, O heroes, in the battles of Inis-thona. Distant is the land of my war! ye shall not hear of Oscar's fall! Some bard may find me there: some bard may give my name to song. The daughter of the stranger shall see my tomb, and weep over the youth, that came from afar. The bard shall say, at the feast, "hear the song of Oscar from the distant land!"

"Oscar," replied the king of Morven; "thou shalt fight, son of my fame; Prepare my dark-bosomed ship to carry my hero to Inis-thona. Son of my son, regard our fame; thou art of the race of renown! Let not the children of strangers say, feeble are the sons of Morven!

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the lake of Lego. His great actions are handed down by tradition, and his hospitality has passed into a proverb. *M.*

It strikes me that Branno, the father-in-law of Ossian, gave him the land about *Selma* on the *banks* of the *Legon*, when he married Evirallin—for Ossian, ever after, appears to have generally resided at Selma—Even when Fingal was in Morven—particularly in time of peace—for in the poem Cathlin of Clutha, page 349, we find a messenger arrive from the chief, "*in the echoing bay of Carmona*",—in which Selma was situate,—to crave the assistance of Ossian. *C.*

Be thou, in battle, a roaring storm; mild as the evening sun in peace!" Tell, Oscar, to Inis-thona's king, that Fingal remembers his youth; when we strove in the combat together, in the days of Agandecca."

They lifted up the sounding sail; the wind whistled through the thongs* of their masts. Waves lash the oozy rocks: the strength of ocean roars. My son beheld, from the wave, the land of groves. He rushed into Runa's sounding bay, and sent his sword to Annir of spears. The grey-haired hero rose, when he saw the sword of Fingal. His eyes were full of tears; he remembered his battles in youth. Twice had they lifted the spear, before the lovely Agandecca: heroes stood far distant, as if two spirits were striving in winds

"But now," began the king, "I am old; the sword lies useless in my hall. Thou, who art of Morven's race! Annir has seen the battle of spears; but now he is pale and withered, like the oak of Lano. I have no son to meet thee with joy, to bring thee to the halls of his fathers. Argon is pale in the tomb, and Ruro is no more. My daughter is in the hall of strangers. She longs to behold my tomb. Her spouse shakes ten thousand spears; he comes † a cloud of death from

* Leather thongs were used among the Celtic nations, instead of ropes.

† Cormalo had resolved on a war against his father-in-law, Annir, king of Inis-thona, in order to deprive him of his kingdom; the injustice of his designs was so much resented by Fingal, that he sent his grandson, Oscar, to the assistance of Annir. Both armies came soon to a battle, in which the conduct and valour of Oscar obtained a complete victory. An end was put to the war by the death of Cormalo, who fell in a single combat, by Oscar's hand. Thus is the story delivered down by tradition: though

Lano. Come, to share the feast of Annir, son of echoing Morven!"

Three days they feasted together; on the fourth, Annir heard the name of Oscar. They rejoiced in the shell*. They pursued the boars of Runa. Beside the fount of mossy stones, the weary heroes rest. The tear steals in secret from Annir: he broke the rising sigh. "Here darkly rest," the hero said, "the children of my youth. This stone is the tomb of Ruro; that tree sounds over the grave of Argon. Do ye hear my voice, O my sons, within your narrow house? Or do ye speak in these rustling leaves, when the winds of the desert rise?"

"King of Inis-thona," said Oscar, "how fell the children of youth? The wild boar rushes over their tombs, but he does not disturb their repose. They pursue deer † formed of clouds, and bend their airy bow. They still love the sport of their youth; and mount the wind with joy."

"Carmalo," replied the king, "is a chief of ten thousand spears. He dwells at the waters of Lano ‡, which sends forth the vapour of death. He came to

the poet, to raise the character of his son, makes Oscar himself propose the expedition.

* *To rejoice in the shell*, is a phrase for feasting sumptuously and drinking freely.

† The notion of Ossian concerning the state of the deceased, was the same with that of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They imagined that the souls pursued, in their separate state, the employments and pleasures of their former life.

‡ Lano was a lake of Scandinavia, remarkable, in the days of Ossian, for emitting a pestilential vapour in autumn. *And thou, O valiant Duchomar! like the mist of marshy Lano; when it sails over the plains of autumn, and brings death to the host.* Fingal, B. I.

Runa's echoing halls, and sought the honour of the spear.* The youth was lovely as the first beam of the sun; few were they who could meet him in fight! My heroes yielded to Cormalo: my daughter was seized in his love. Argon and Ruro returned from the chase; the tears of their pride descend: they roll their silent eyes on Runa's heroes, who had yielded to a stranger. Three days they feasted with Cormalo: on the fourth young Argon fought. But who could fight with Argon! Cormalo is overcome. His heart swelled with the grief of pride; he resolved, in secret, to behold the death of my sons. They went to the hills of Runa: they pursued the dark-brown hinds. The arrow of Cormalo flew in secret; my children fell in blood. He came to the maid of his love; to Inis-thona's long-haired maid. They fled over the desert. Annir remained alone. Night came on, and day appeared: nor Argon's voice, nor Ruro's came. At length their much-loved dog was seen; the fleet and bounding Runar. He came into the hall and howled; and seemed to look towards the place of their fall. We followed him: we found them here; we laid them by this mossy stream. This is the haunt of Annir, when the chase of the hinds is past. I bend like the trunk of an aged oak; my tears for ever flow!"

"O Ronnan!" said the rising Oscar, "Ogar king of spears! call my heroes to my side, the sons of streamy Morven. To-day we go to Lano's water, that sends forth the vapour of death. Cormalo will not long rejoice: death is often at the point of our swords!"

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* By *the honour of the spear*, is meant the tournament practised among the ancient northern nations.

"They came over the desert like stormy clouds, when the winds roll them along the heath: their edges are tinged with lightning; the echoing groves foresee the storm! The horn of Oscar's battle is heard; Lano shook over all its waves. The children of the lake convened around the sounding shield of Cormalo. Oscar fought, as he was wont in war. Cormalo fell beneath his sword: the sons of dismal Lano fled to their secret vales! Oscar brought the daughter of Innis-thona to Annir's echoing halls. The face of age is bright with joy; he blest the king of swords!

How great was the joy of Ossian, when he beheld the distant sail of his son! it was like a cloud of light that rises in the east, when the traveller is sad in a land unknown; and dismal night, with her ghosts, is sitting around in shades! We brought him with songs to Selma's halls. Fingal spread the feast of shells. A thousand bards raised the name of Oscar: Morven answered to the sound. The daughter of Toscar was there; her voice was like the harp; when the distant sound comes, in the evening, on the soft-rustling breeze of the vale!

O lay me, ye that see the light, near some rock of my hills! let the thick hazels be around, let the rustling oak be near. Green be the place of my rest; let the sound of the distant torrent be heard. Daughter of Toscar, take the harp, and raise the lovely song of Selma; that sleep may overtake my soul in the midst of joy; that the dreams of my youth may return, and the days of the mighty Fingal. Selma! I behold thy towers, thy trees, thy shaded wall! I see the heroes of Morven; I hear the song of bards; Oscar lifts the

sword of Cormalo;* a thousand youths admire its studded thongs. They look with wonder on my son: They admire the strength of his arm. They mark the joy of his father's eyes; they long for an equal fame. And ye shall have your fame, O sons of streamy Morven! My soul is often brightened with song; I remember the friends of my youth. But sleep descends in the sound of the harp! pleasant dreams begin to rise Ye sons of the chase stand far distant, nor disturb my rest. The bard of other times holds discourse with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old! Sons of the chase, stand far distant! disturb not the dreams of Ossian!

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* Though this passage appears to place Selma in Morven, yet to separate thereby the Irish Channel, it only requires us to remember that the wants of the race of Connor's kings of Antrim county, required the presence of a great many of the "sons of Streamy Morven," to secure the territory to the kinsman of a king from the native Irish princes. *C.*

THE SONGS OF SELMA.

ARGUMENT.

Address to the evening star. Apostrophe to Fingal and his times. Minona sings before the king the song of the unfortunate Colma, and the bards exhibit other specimens of their poetical talents, according to an annual custom established by the monarchs of the ancient Caledonians.

THE

SONGS OF SELMA.

STAR of descending night! fair is thy light in the west! thou liftest thy unshorn head from thy cloud: thy steps are stately on thy hill. What dost thou behold in the plain? The stormy winds are laid. The murmur of the torrent comes from afar. Roaring waves climb the distant rock. The flies of evening are on their feeble wings; the hum of their course is on the field. What dost thou behold, fair light? But thou dost smile and depart. The waves come with joy around thee: they bathe thy lovely hair. Farewel, thou silent beam! Let the light of Ossian's soul arise!

And it does arise in its strength! I behold my departed friends. Their gathering is on Lora, as in the days of other years. Fingal comes like a watery column of mist; his heroes are around: And see the bards of song, grey-haired Ullin! stately Ryno! Alpin*, with the tuneful voice! the soft complaint of Minona! How are ye changed, my friends, since the days of Selma's feast? when we contended, like gales of spring, as they

* Alpin is from the same root with Albion, or rather Albin, the ancient name of Britain; Alp, *high Island*, or *country*. The present name of our Island has its origin in the Celtic tongue; so that those who derived it from any other, betrayed their ignorance of the ancient language of our country. *Brait* or *Braid*, extensive; and *in*, land.

fly along the hill, and bend by turns the feebly-whistling grass.

Minona * came forth in her beauty; with down-cast look and tearful eye. Her hair flew slowly on the blast, that rushed unfrequent from the hill. The souls of the heroes were sad when she raised the tuneful voice. Often had they seen the grave of Salgar †, the dark dwelling of white-bosomed Colma ‡. Colma left alone on the hill, with all her voice of song! Salgar promised to come: but the night descended around. Hear the voice of Colma, when she sat alone on the hill!

COLMA.

It is night; I am alone, forlorn on the hill of storms. The wind is heard in the mountain. The torrent pours down the rock. No hut receives me from the rain; forlorn on the hill of winds.

Rise, moon! from behind thy clouds. Stars of the night arise! Lead me, some light, to the place, where my love rests from the chase alone! his bow near him, unstrung: his dogs panting around him. But here I must sit alone, by the rock of the mossy stream. The stream and the wind roar aloud. I hear not the voice of my love! Why delays my Salgar, why the chief of the hill, his promise? Here is the rock, and here the tree! here is the roaring stream! Thou didst promise with night to be here. Ah! whither is my Salgar gone? With thee I would fly, from my father; with

* Ossian introduces Minona, not in the ideal scene in his own mind, which he had described; but at the annual feast of Selma, where the bards repeated their works before Fingal.

† Sealg-'er, *a hunter.*

‡ Culmath, *a woman with fine hair.*

thee, from my brother of pride. Our race have long been foes; we are not foes, O Salgar!

Cease a little while, O wind! stream, be thou silent a while! let my voice be heard around. Let my wanderer hear me! Salgar! it is Colma who calls. Here is the tree, and the rock. Salgar, my love! I am here. Why delayest thou thy coming? Lo! the calm moon comes forth. The flood is bright in the vale. The rocks are grey on the steep. I see him not on the brow. His dogs come not before him, with tidings of his near approach. Here I must sit alone!

Who lie on the heath beside me? Are they my love and my brother? Speak to me, O my friends! To Colma they give no reply. Speak to me: I am alone! My soul is tormented with fears! Ah! they are dead! Their swords are red from the fight. O my brother! my brother! why hast thou slain my Salgar? why, O Salgar! hast thou slain my brother? Dear were ye both to me! what shall I say in your praise? Thou wert fair on the hill among thousands! He was terrible in fight. Speak to me; hear my voice; hear me, sons of my love! They are silent; silent for ever! Cold, cold are their breasts of clay! Oh! from the rock on the hill; from the top of the windy steep, speak, ye ghosts of the dead! speak, I will not be afraid! Whither are ye gone to rest? In what cave of the hill shall I find the departed? No feeble voice is on the gale; no answer half-drowned in the storm!

I sit in my grief! I wait for morning in my tears! Rear the tomb, ye friends of the dead. Close it not till Colma come. My life flies away like a dream! why should I stay behind? Here shall I rest with my friends, by the stream of the sounding rock. When

night comes on the hill; when the loud winds arise; my ghost shall stand in the blast, and mourn the death of my friends. The hunter shall hear from his booth. He shall fear, but love my voice! For sweet shall my voice be for my friends: pleasant were her friends to Colma!

Such was thy song, Minona, softly-blushing daughter of Torman. Our tears descended for Colma, and our souls were sad! Ullin came with his harp; he gave the song of Alpin. The voice of Alpin was pleasant: the soul of Ryno was a beam of fire! But they had rested in the narrow house: their voice had ceased in Selma. Ullin had returned, one day, from the chase, before the heroes fell. He heard their strife on the hill; their song was soft but sad. They mourned the fall of Morar, first of mortal men! His soul was like the soul of Fingal; his sword like the sword of Oscar. But he fell, and his father mourned: his sister's eyes were full of tears. Minona's eyes were full of tears, the sister of car-borne Morar. She retired from the song of Ullin, like the moon in the west, when she foresees the shower, and hides her fair head in a cloud. I touched the harp, with Ullin; the song of mourning rose!

RYNO

The wind and the rain are past: calm is the noon of day. The clouds are divided in heaven. Over the green hills flies the inconstant sun. Red through the stony vale comes down the stream of the hill. Sweet are thy murmurs, O stream! but more sweet is the voice I hear. It is the voice of Alpin, the son of song, mourning for the dead! Bent is his head of age; red his tearful eye. Alpin, thou son of song, why alone

on the silent hill? why complainest thou, as a blast in the wood; as a wave on the lonely shore?

ALPIN.

My tears, O Ryno! are for the dead; my voice for those that have passed away. Tall thou art on the hill; fair among the sons of the vale. But thou shalt fall like Morar*; the mourner shall sit on thy tomb. The hills shall know thee no more; thy bow shall lie in thy hall unstrung!

Thou wert swift, O Morar! as a roe on the desart; terrible as a meteor of fire. Thy wrath was as the storm. Thy sword in battle, as lightning in the field. Thy voice was a stream after rain; like thunder on distant hills. Many fell by thy arm; they were consumed in the flames of thy wrath. But when thou didst return from war, how peaceful was thy brow! Thy face was like the sun after rain; like the moon in the silence of night; calm as the breast of the lake when the loud wind is laid.

Narrow is thy dwelling now! dark the place of thine abode! With three steps I compass thy grave, O thou who wast so great before! Four stones, with their heads of moss, are the only memorial of thee. A tree with scarce a leaf, long grass, which whistles in the wind, mark to the hunter's eye the grave of the mighty Morar. Morar! thou art low indeed. Thou hast no mother to mourn thee; no maid with her tears of love. Dead is she that brought thee forth. Fallen is the daughter of Morglan.

Who on his staff is this? who is this, whose head is white with age? whose eyes are red with tears? who

* Mor-ar, *great man.*

quakes at every step? It is thy father,* O Morar! the father of no son but thee. He heard of thy fame in war; he heard of foes dispersed. He heard of Morar's renown; why did he not hear of his wound? Weep, thou father of Morar! weep; but thy son heareth thee not. Deep is the sleep of the dead; low their pillow of dust. No more shall he hear thy voice; no more awake at thy call. When shall it be morn in the grave, to bid the slumberer awake? Farewel, thou bravest of men! thou conqueror in the field! but the field shall see thee no more; nor the dark wood be lightened with the splendour of thy steel. Thou hast left no son. The song shall preserve thy name. Future times shall hear of thee; they shall hear of the fallen Morar!

The grief of all arose, but most the bursting sigh of Armin.† He remembers the death of his son, who fell in the days of his youth. Carmor ‡ was near the hero, the chief of the echoing Galmal. Why bursts the sigh of Armin? he said. Is there a cause to mourn? The song comes, with its music, to melt and please the soul. It is like soft mist, that, rising from a lake, pours on the silent vale; the green flowers are filled with dew, but the sun returns in his strength, and the mist is gone. Why art thou sad, O Armin! chief of sea-surrounded Gorma?

Sad! I am! nor small is my cause of woe! Carmor, thou hast lost no son; thou hast lost no daughter of beauty. Colgar the valiant lives; and Annira, fairest

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* Torman, the son of Carthul, lord of I-mora, one of the western isles.

† Armin, *a hero*. He was chief or petty king of Gorma, i. e. *the blue island*, supposed to be one of the Hebrides.

‡ Cear-mor, *a tall dark-complexioned man*.

maid. The boughs of thy house ascend, O Carmor! but Armin is the last of his race. Dark is thy bed, O Daura! deep thy sleep in the tomb! When shalt thou awake with thy songs? with all thy voice of music?

Arise, winds of autumn, arise; blow along the heath! streams of the mountains roar! roar, tempests, in the groves of my oaks! walk through broken clouds, O moon! show thy pale face, at intervals! bring to my mind the night, when all my children fell; when Arindal the mighty fell; when Daura the lovely failed! Daura, my daughter! thou wert fair; fair as the moon on Fura;* white as the driven snow; sweet as the breathing gale. Arindal, thy bow was strong. Thy spear was swift in the field. Thy look was like mist on the wave: thy shield, a red cloud in a storm. Armar, renowned in war, came, and sought Daura's love. He was not long refused: fair was the hope of their friends!

Erath, son of Odgal, repined: his brother had been slain by Armar. He came disguised like a son of the sea: fair was his skiff on the wave; white his locks of age; calm his serious brow. Fairest of women, he said, lovely daughter of Armin! a rock not distant in the sea, bears a tree on its side; red shines the fruit afar. There Armar waits for Daura. I come to carry his love! She went; she called on Armar. Nought answered, but the son † of the rock, Armar, my love!

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* Fuar-a, *cold island.*

† By *the son of the rock* the poet means the echoing back of the human voice from a rock. The vulgar were of opinion, that this repetition of sound was made by a spirit within the rock; and they, on that account, called it *mac talla; the son who dwells in the rock.*

my love! why tormentest thou me with fear? hear, son of Arnart, hear: it is Daura who calleth thee! Erath the traitor fled laughing to the land. She lifted up her voice; she called for her brother and her father. Arindal! Armin! none to relieve your Daura!

Her voice came over the sea. Arindal my son descended from the hill; rough in the spoils of the chase. His arrows rattled by his side; his bow was in his hand: five dark grey dogs attend his steps. He saw fierce Erath on the shore: he seized and bound him to an oak. Thick wind the thongs * of the hide around his limbs; he loads the wind with his groans. Arindal ascends the deep in his boat, to bring Daura to land. Armar came in his wrath, and let fly the grey-feathered shaft. It sung; it sunk in thy heart, O Arindal, my son! for Erath the traitor thou diedst. The oar is stopped at once; he panted on the rock and expired. What is thy grief, O Daura, when round thy feet is poured thy brother's blood! The boat is broken in twain. Armar plunges into the sea, to rescue his Daura, or die. Sudden a blast from the hill came over the waves. He sunk, and he rose no more.

Alone, on the sea-beat rock, my daughter was heard to complain. Frequent and loud were her cries. What could her father do? All night I stood on the shore. I saw her by the faint beam of the moon. All night I heard her cries. Loud was the wind; the rain beat hard on the hill. Before morning appeared her voice was weak. It died away, like the evening-breeze among the grass of the rocks. Spent with grief she expired;

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* The poet here only means that Erath was bound with leathern thongs.

and left thee Armin alone. Gone is my strength in war! fallen my pride among women! When the storms aloft arise; when the north lifts the wave on high; I sit by the sounding shore, and look on the fatal rock. Often by the setting moon, I see the ghosts of my children. Half viewless, they walk in mournful conference together. Will none of you speak in pity? They do not regard their father. I am sad, O Carmor, nor small is my cause of woe!

Such were the words of the bards in the days of song; when the king heard the music of harps, the tales of other times! The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice* of Cona! the first among a thousand bards! But age is now on my tongue; my soul has failed! I hear, at times, the ghosts of bards, and learn their pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind. I hear the call of years! They say, as they pass along, why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame! Roll on, ye dark-brown years; ye bring no joy on your course! Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has failed. The sons of song are gone to rest. My voice remains, like a blast, that roars, lonely, on a sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The dark moss whistles there; the distant mariner sees the waving trees!

* Ossian is sometimes poetically called *the voice of Cona*.

FINIS.

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